

LONG ISLAND ELECTRIC RAILWAY

JAMAICA CENTRAL RAILWAYS

VINCENT F. SEYFRIED

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THE STORY OF THE LONG ISLAND ELECTRIC RAILWAY
AND THE
JAMAICA CENTRAL RAILWAYS
1894 - 1933

Foreword

The warm welcome given to the "New York & Queens County Railway", volume I of the Long Island Trolley Histories, has encouraged me to continue with this second effort, the Story of The Long Island Electric Railway. This trolley system, though small and unimportant compared with such large operations as the New York & Queens, has a special sentimental value to me, in that it is a warm and pleasant memory of my younger days, and the direct cause of my life-long interest in trolley railroading. This little story, therefore, is not so much a formal history as it is the biography of an old friend, gone these many years, but by no means forgotten.

Again I am indebted to Mr. Felix E. Reifschneider of Orlando, Florida, who has given me the benefit of his memories, and who has attended to the publication of this manuscript.

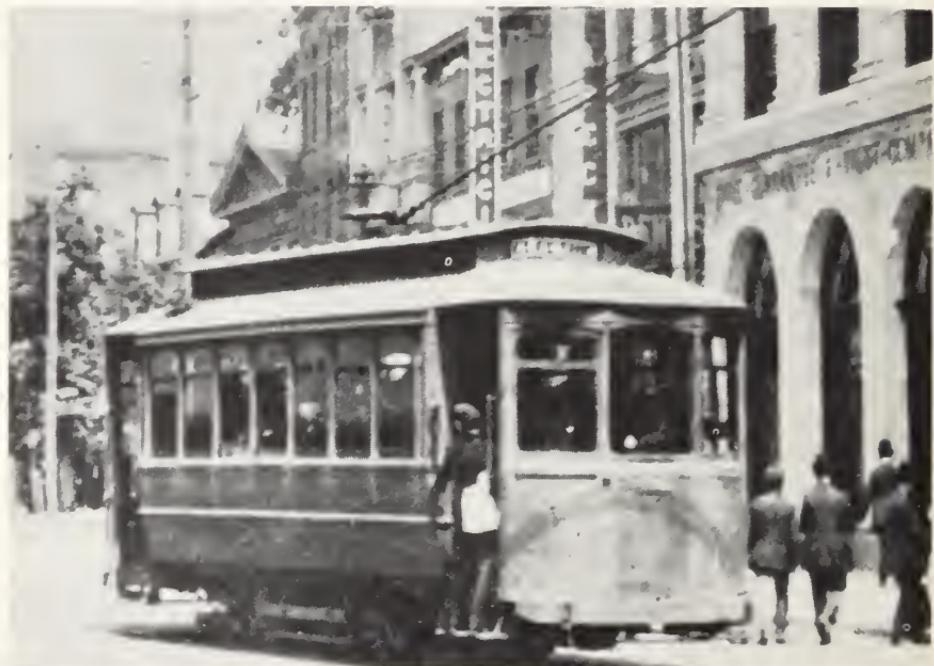
Miss Marguerite Doggett of the Queensborough Public Library has been cooperative far beyond the call of duty in making available to me the "Long Island Democrat", and the special facilities of the Long Island Collection.

My further thanks are due to William J. Rugen, Frank Goldsmith, W. Mason Cooper, George Votava, Robert L. Presbrey, William Slade, and William Lichtenstern, who have come forward with pictures and numerous helpful details.

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Vincent F. Seyfried
193-10 100th Avenue
Hollis, N.Y.

April, 1951



Two views of 160th St. and Jamaica Ave. about 1908,
with LIE car (50-54 series) in center

THE LONG ISLAND ELECTRIC RAILWAY

CONSTRUCTION DAYS

The Long Island Electric is in a sense the orphan among New York City trolley systems, and one whose intimate history is not only unwritten, but almost completely unknown. Quiet and unobtrusive in its debut, the railway grew up in a section still largely country, and so thinly populated as to provide only the most meagre support. Then, no sooner had the line reached its full development than it was swallowed up by bigger and more powerful systems that proceeded to ignore its existence, or worse still, grudgingly provide it with only the absolute minimum of equipment necessary to sustain operation, so that by the 20's, the line became a symbol of Toonerville railroading and the butt of jokes among its riders. The line was never given a chance to make local history; its managers, too often outsiders with no knowledge of local conditions, never bothered to take an interest in proper scheduling and maintenance, allowing the line almost to fall apart for lack of care. Articles on the Long Island Electric are rare, and pictures of it in operation almost unknown; even the public records contain little more than an acknowledgment of the line's existence. It is only from the local newspapers of the last 50 years that some idea of trolley railroading on the Long Island Electric can be obtained, and some hint recovered of the human interest that underlies all railroads.

Central Queens, the cradle of the Long Island Electric Railway, was in the 90's a very different place from what it is today. Then, as now, Jamaica was the center of population and business, but the resident of Queens today would scarcely recognize the little village of sixty years ago. The main street, Jamaica Avenue -or Fulton Street- as it was then called, was a private turnpike owned by the Jamaica & Brooklyn Road Co., and travelers desiring to use the road had to pay a fee for horse, wagon, and rider at the company's three toll gates. Fences lined the road just out of town so that wagons could not use the road and turn off without paying the toll. In the early decades of the century, the turnpike was well maintained, but was allowed to fall into gradual disrepair, until by the 90's the public outcry was loud against the rotted planks and ruts that made traveling hazardous. The Jamaica Avenue car line, operating since 1866, was almost the sole user of the road as wagon traffic dwindled. The eastern village boundary of Jamaica was at 168th St.; at this point, the Brooklyn & Jamaica Turnpike ended and the Hempstead & Jamaica Turnpike began. This latter was a continuation eastward along Jamaica Avenue of the other turnpike, and in even worse condition.

Jamaica itself was rather tiny. The heart of town was 160th St. and Jamaica Avenue. Hillside Avenue was the northern limit of village settlement, 168th St. the eastern, and South St. the southern; to the east lay the small sleepy settlements of Dunton, Richmond Hill, Woodhaven, and Ozone Park. The few streets opened up were dotted with occasional houses, and all about stretched farmland and irregular patches of woodland. At this time Queens County was not yet a part of New York City, and the Town of Jamaica con-

troiled all the southern half of the county from what is now the Grand Central Parkway to the Rockaways. To build a traction line, two all-powerful bodies had to give consent: The Town Superintendents, and the Highway Commissioners. Each little hamlet also had its own Mayor and trustees whose good will was useful.

This was the scene when the Long Island Electric Railway made its appearance in the Spring of 1894. On March 5th of that year the company filed its papers of incorporation with the State. The capital of the company was set at \$600,000, divided into \$100 shares. The directors and leading backers were as follows: Alexander R. Hart of Brooklyn, 1400 shares; Charles H. Mullin of Mt. Holly Springs, Pa. 1400 shares; Clarence and Benjamin Wolf of Philadelphia, 750 shares each; Louis and Albert Wolf, 740 shares each; Edwin Wolf of Philadelphia, 20 shares; Charles M. Cooper, Julius C. Von Arx, William H. English, and George W. Miller of New York, 5 shares each; Henry Loeb, William F. May, E. Allmyer, and Charles Miller of New York, 5 shares each.

The first route that the company applied for was along the whole length of the Merrick Road from Seaford at the Suffolk line to Jamaica, and then along South St., Sutphin Blvd., and Liberty Ave., to the Brooklyn line. In Freeport a spur was to run north up Main St. to Greenwich St., Hempstead, and on to the intersection of Front & Greenwich Sts. In Jamaica a spur was to be laid in 166th St. from Liberty Ave. to Jamaica Ave.(1). As early as May 1st, the company had canvassers going from house to house along the Merrick Road gathering the required signatures for track-laying.(2) In two sessions on May 15 and 22, the Highway Commissioners of Jamaica granted the company the right to build a double track line on Liberty Ave., but imposed the following conditions:

1. The company shall pave the street between the rails and two feet on either side with block paving stone.
2. After 10 years the company shall pay the town 2% of its gross revenues, and after 20 years 3%.
3. That cars shall be run both ways every 15 minutes between 9 A.M. and 5 P.M.
4. The road shall be built and in full operation within two years.
5. The rate of fare shall be 5 cents from Jamaica to Brooklyn (3).

The company at first objected violently to paying 2% after 10 years, but succeeded only in lengthening the time to 12 years.(4)

In the summer of 1894 the company, for some reason that would be interesting to know, changed its mind on the routes and applied for new ones. In September the company asked for and received permission for laying a single track in 160th St. (Washington St.) and persuaded the town to postpone the opening date of the line on South St. to May 1, 1895.(5) On Oct. 11, the company filed with the State an almost complete change of routes:

1. New York World, March 20, 1894
2. Long Island Democrat, May 1, 1894 2:4
3. ibid. May 22, 1894 3:3; Report of the PSC for 1913, vol. V, pp. 593-600
4. Long Island Democrat, July 17, 1894 2:2
5. ibid. October 9, 1894, 2:3



Top: No. 50 (Brill 1896) at Jamaica Ave. and 162nd St.
in 1898

Bottom: No. 53 at South and 160th Sts. Jamaica in 1898
No. 17 (leased 5-window closed car) at right
Waiting room and general offices in center
(Both from Wm. J. Rugen)

1. From Liberty Ave. on Waltham St. to 105th Ave.; on 105th Ave. to 148th St.; on 148th St. to South St., and along South St. to village line.
2. On 160th St. from Jamaica Ave. to South St.
3. On New York Avenue and Rockaway Turnpike to Hook Creek.
4. On South St. and Liberty Ave., Brinkerhoff Ave., Hollis Ave., Springfield Blvd. to Hempstead Turnpike. This roundabout route was requested because Jamaica Ave. was still a private road and not available to trolley operation.
5. On 147th Ave. (Cherry Ave.) from New York Blvd. to Cross Island Blvd. in Rosedale; along Cross Island Blvd., Ocean Ave., Rosedale Rd. and Central Ave. to West Broadway, and along West Broadway through Hewlett, Cedarhurst, Lawrence, Inwood and Far Rockaway to Rockaway Beach.
6. Along the East Rockaway Rd. from Hewlett to East Rockaway and then south over the Long Beach Rd. to Long Beach.
7. From East Rockaway (Atlantic and Ocean Aves.) on Ocean, Village and North Aves. Lynbrook, then north along Hempstead Ave. and Franklin Ave. to Franklin and Atlantic Aves., Hempstead. (1)

All these routes were granted by the Highway authorities subject to the same conditions, except that the Rockaway line was to be single track for the present with flat rails, with the right to construct a second track in later years if traffic warranted. The Rockaway line was to be finished in three years' time and cars were to be run hourly from 6 A.M. to 9 P.M., and in winter "as often as the convenience of the public shall require".(2)

On Jan. 15, 1895 President Hart asked the town for permission to use cobblestones in place of granite blocks for paving. It seems that a law had just been passed to the effect that quarried stone had to be cut and dressed where used; this would have made a granite paving prohibitive in cost. At the same time, permission was asked for erecting a temporary wooden bridge over the Long Island R.R. at 100th Street because of the railroad's refusal to let the company cross at grade. Both requests were granted, by the town, in February, 1895.(3) The town further permitted the company to place a siding in 160th St. (Washington St.) at Jamaica Ave. so that a car might come up the street while one waited at the terminal.(4)

With the coming of Spring in 1895 the Long Island Electric began its first construction; the deadline of May 1st for South St. was not far off after all! On March 25th Contractor Henry Van Allen carted the first load of ties into Jamaica.(5) All during April more ties arrived and were distributed along the route.(6) On Saturday, April 6th, a large force of men began work at the Brooklyn line;(7) by April 22nd the grading had reached South St., and by May 7th one track had been laid as far as New York Ave. Nearly 300 men were now at work in a frantic effort to meet the deadline, just advanced to June 1st.(8) Early in June the poles were distributed along South St. and the wires were prepared for stringing.(9) A second gang was busy laying track on New York Ave. the week of June 23rd. Everything

1. Report of the PSC for 1913, vol.V. pp.593-600 -Long Island Democrat, October 23, 1894 3:4
2. Report of the PSC for 1913, vol.V., pp.593-600
3. Long Island Democrat, Jan.22, 1895 3:4; also Feb.5, 1895 2:2
4. ibid. Feb.12, 1895 2:2
5. Long Island Democrat, March 26, 1895 3:1
6. ibid. April 2, 1895 3:2
7. ibid. April 9, 1895 3:3
8. ibid. May 7, 1895 3:5
9. ibid. June 4, 1895 3:1 & June 25, 1895

was to be ready for a grand opening on the Fourth of July.

For some reason not now clear, legal obstacles cropped up the last week of June and put an end to construction; perhaps the injunction against the company, obtained by the Long Island R.R., had a hand in the delay, for in September, President Hart again requested permission to build a bridge over the L.I.R.R. tracks at Ozone Park.(1) Work was resumed on the track laying in South St., but the coming of frosty weather put an end to the season's operations.

Besides actual construction, the Long Island Electric had been active during the year securing new routes and franchises. In January of 1895 the company sought permission from the south side villages of Nassau (then Queens) to build a trolley line along various macadamized roads (Central Ave. and Broadway) from Lynbrook to Far Rockaway, from East Rockaway to Freeport along East Rockaway Rd., Main St. and Atlantic Ave., with a spur to Long Beach on the Long Beach Rd. Heavy opposition developed among the residents along West Broadway in the villages of Hewlett, Woodmere, Cedarhurst and Lawrence, because of the expected damage to the roads in laying rails, and the threat to the peace and quiet of the communities.(2) The company compromised by laying out a new route keeping clear of all paved roads and running from Far Rockaway through Lynbrook and Rockville Centre to Hempstead.(3) On April 1, 1895, the Highway Commissioners of the Town of Hempstead gave their decision: the route from East Rockaway to Freeport and Long Beach was refused, but the route along Ocean Ave. and Central Ave., Valley Stream, and then West Broadway to Far Rockaway was approved, along with a spur on the East Rockaway Rd. to Rockville Centre.(4) The company never attempted to build these Nassau routes; probably it was finding the going along Liberty Ave. and South St. difficult enough without expanding into more distant communities.

Far more important were the legal developments concerning the fate of the Jamaica Ave. plank road from 168th St. to Hempstead. For years the turnpike company had been neglecting the road so that travellers fell into mud ruts in winter or were choked with powdery dust in summer. Many of the planks were rotted and were not replaced. Things finally got so bad in March of 1895 that the Town of Hempstead ordered the toll-keepers to throw open the gates and let the people travel free, under the terms of an old law by which the Town authorities could deprive the turnpike companies of revenue for neglect of maintenance. The turnpike company felt that its day had passed and was indifferent to what happened to the road; the annual toll amounted only to \$7,000. Instead of starting repairs at once, the company discharged all its toll-keepers on April 1st and left the fate of the roads to the courts.(5) The village authorities were anxious to turn Jamaica Ave. into a public road to be maintained at county expense, but the turnpike company refused to give up the road, despite its virtual abandonment of the property. To put pressure on the owners, the Town sued the company for maintaining a public nuisance, and the case went before a Grand Jury.(6)

1. *ibid.* Sept., 1895 2:4 and Sept. 24, 1895 3:4

2. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 13, 1895 2:1

3. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 18, 1895 7:3

4. *Long Island Democrat*, April 9, 1895 2:1

5. *ibid.* April 2, 1895 2:1 and 3:1

6. *ibid.* June 25, 1895 2:4; July 2, 1895 2:3; August 6, 1895 2:1

At this juncture the Long Island Electric Railway decided the time was ripe to sound out the turnpike company as to the possibility of laying a street railway along its whole length to Hempstead, but events moved so fast that the turnpike company had no time to reply. In August 1895 the plank road company was convicted of the nuisance charge and of violating its charter by failing to maintain property; the court ordered the old company dissolved and the avenue turned into a country road, open to all. The Highway Commissioners lost no time in taking possession of the road. On Oct. 4, 1895 the three officials, armed with axes, attacked the Hollis Toll Gate, chopped it off, cut down the posts, and graded the street at that point to make it passable for wagon traffic.(1) Finally, in the last week of November 1895, Jamaica Avenue became a public road.(2) The way was now open for an extension of the Long Island Electric to Hollis, Queens, and even Hempstead.

The new year 1896 brought a great burst of energy and enthusiasm to the company. Early in January many of the legal obstacles that had been plaguing the line were cleared away at last, and fresh contracts were given out, and more 9 in. 80 lb. girder rail ordered from Pittsburg. The contract was awarded to William F. Hogan, representing the Norton syndicate of New York.(3) This same man was later (1899) to build the Flushing-Jamaica trolley line, and still later became president of the Long Island Electric Railway. The company also made an agreement with President P.H. Flynn of the Nassau Electric R.R. Company of Brooklyn to connect their Liberty Ave. line with the terminus of his new Bergen St. car line, which had just reached Sheridan Ave. A second and more important agreement was made with the Kings County Elevated Ry. to run the L.I. Electric cars up on an incline to connect with the "L" cars to downtown Brooklyn, so that passengers might transfer without climbing stairs. The cost of this connection was to be divided between the two companies, schedules were to be arranged so that the trolleys and "L" cars would meet, and through tickets were to be sold for passage between Jamaica or Far Rockaway to Brooklyn Bridge. Through expresses making only three stops were to rush the Queens passengers to the bridge; it was even suggested that the Long Island Electric trolleys should be towed by steam "L" engines to Brooklyn! During this same month the company placed its first order for trolleys, some of closed platform design seating 32 people, and some of open cars, seating 60.

Two other plans of the company will bring a smile to the reader of today. The managers thought up a scheme whereby the company's flat cars would pick up and convey to market all the vegetable produce grown along the line; this was to be done at night and the flat cars were to run next morning over the BRT routes in Brooklyn to the various stores and markets in the city. Another novel idea was to make contracts with the large department stores like Loeser's, Abraham & Straus, Namm's, etc., to deliver all their packages in the southern Queens area, at a rate low enough to supersede the horse and wagon delivery of that day. Like so many wonderful ideas on paper, neither of these was ever put into practice.

The Long Island Electric was enormously fortunate in securing, in the fall of 1895, complete control of the Jamaica & Rockaway

1. Long Island Democrat, October 8, 1895 3:4

2. *ibid.* November 26, 1895 3:1

3. *ibid.* April 7, 1895 2:2

Turnpike Co. The Rockaway Road was then as now, the most direct route to Far Rockaway, and in the 90's it was, like Jamaica Avenue, still a private road in the hands of a moribund turnpike company. The road was in disrepair and the toll gates seemingly untended, and the stockholders were apparently glad to sell out to the trolley company. The Long Island Electric bought up all the mortgages and claims and a majority of the stock, and so acquired a private right-of-way directly into Far Rockaway.(1) Years later, when Queens had long been a part of New York City and road improvement was going on all over the borough, the city discovered to its surprise and great annoyance that it had no clear title to the road, and on several occasions efforts were made to bully the trolley company into surrendering its rights. The city alternately coaxed and threatened, but the Long Island Electric held firm. Finally in 1916 the city took formal title to the road, and over the company's protests, the western half of the highway was widened in places to 50 feet.(2) The Long Island Electric did not want to oppose progress; it merely asked the city to recognize its long-term special rights, but the authorities were naturally loth to admit to such unusual special privileges and regarded the company as just one of many occupying a public street solely under city-granted franchise rights. Right down to the end of the trolley period in 1933, Rockaway Blvd. remained 24 feet wide with the trolley track on one side of the road. As soon as the cars vanished, the city seized the opportunity to acquire full rights and to widen the street to its present six lane proportions.

In March 1896 the company filed with the Secretary of State two extensions of route: First, from 160th St. & Jamaica Ave. east along Jamaica Ave. to the Hempstead Turnpike and eastward to Hempstead. Since Jamaica Ave. had just become a public road, the company was losing no time in asking for a franchise. Second, on the Rockaway Road from Hook Creek to Mott Ave. Inwood, then along Mott, Lawrence, Wanzer, Doughty, Bayview, and Sheridan Aves. to the Far Rockaway depot; also along Doughty Blvd. to Redfern Ave., and along Redfern to Mott Ave. This latter became the route finally settled upon for the Rockaway trolley.

The village trustees of Far Rockaway, after a long delay, finally gave their consent to the Redfern Ave. stretch and a Mott Ave. terminal on March 14, 1896, completing the company's necessary franchises. They added two restrictions; there was to be a single track only, and after 20 years the company was to pay to the village of Far Rockaway 2% of its gross revenue in the town.(3) Obviously, the village fathers had learned something from Jamaica; the trolley company was not going to collect Rockaway money without paying something in return.

With the coming of fine Spring weather, work was rapidly renewed. Grading was begun at three different points at once; one mile of single track along South St. had been laid in 1895, and was soon extended toward Brooklyn. Once again July 1st was set for opening day except for the Hempstead branch. On April 6th the first ground was broken at the Brooklyn line and grading of the street was pushed rapidly eastward. The first consignment of rails was due April 15th; chestnut ties were to be used throughout; broken stone

1. Long Island Democrat, Dec. 31, 1895 2:4
2. Queensborough Magazine for May 1914, p.24, and for April 1916
3. Long Island Democrat, Mar.24, 1896 3:3; Report of the PSC for 1913, vol.V. pp.593-600

was to be spread as ballast insuring firmness and freedom from dust. Mr. Hogan, the contractor, set himself a timetable; cars were to be running on Liberty Ave. by May 26th; to Rockaway by Aug. 1st; the Rosedale-Valley Stream line by the summer of 1897, and the Hempstead line by the spring of 1898.(1)

The grading reached Rockaway Blvd. on April 20 (2) and Dunton by the 28th. Ties and rails were stacked along Liberty Ave. to Ozone Park the week of the 20th, and all hills and low points leveled in the road.(3) During the same week surveyors were at work staking out and locating the new iron bridge over the Long Island R.R. in Washington St., the old wooden one having been adjudged too weak to bear the weight of the trolleys.(4) The grading crews finished their work over the entire distance between Brooklyn and Jamaica by May 1st, but a delay was caused by a failure in rail delivery. The company appealed to the Highway Commissioners to extend the opening date from May 26th to June 1st, promising operation over one track by that date, the other track to be laid within 60 days. Permission was granted.(5)

An amusing incident took place the night of May 2, 1896 at the Ozone Park L.I.R.R. crossing. For over a year now the railroad had refused the Long Island Electric permission to cross its tracks at grade, unless the company agreed to maintain a flagman at the crossing. The company refused, and the matter remained deadlocked. The L.I.R.R., however, feared that the trolley company would attempt to lay track under cover of darkness some Sunday morning, the favorite time for such tricks, and so it stationed a locomotive with a full head of steam and a car full of 100 Italian laborers to stand guard and interrupt any move to lay rails. The local boys in the saloon on Liberty Ave. decided to have a bit of fun and plied one of their number, John Madden, with liquor until he was mellow enough to agree to anything; a horse car had been secured from somewhere, and Madden was offered \$50 if he would drive the car over the forbidden crossing. Madden got out his own horse, hitched him to the horse car, and off they started. When the car passed over the first rail it fell to the ties and refused to budge despite the driver's shouts. The engineer and the 100 Italians at Woodhaven Junction, seeing something afoot, assumed a Long Island Electric car was crossing and the whole crew steamed down the tracks to give battle. The 100 Italians piled out, armed with clubs and knives, and surrounded the drunken Madden and his horse car while the saloon boys watched expectantly. After observing him suspiciously for some time the Italians saw that it was all a joke and piled back into the coach, starting back to Woodhaven Junction.(6) Next Saturday night, May 9th, a crowd again gathered, hoping for more entertainment, but the crossing was as quiet as a graveyard; even the L.I.R.R. engine was gone.

The L.I. Electric now had the trolley poles erected almost to Jamaica, and the trench for the roadbed opened almost as far. A single track was all built from the Brooklyn line to Lower Morris Park.(7) One week later the poles were up through to Jamaica and were being set up along New York Ave.(8)

1. Long Island Democrat, April 14, 1896 2:3
2. *ibid.* April 21, 1896 2:3
3. *ibid.* April 28, 1896 3:3
4. *ibid.* April 21, 1896 3:2
5. *ibid.* May 5, 1896 3:3
6. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 4, 1896 5:1
7. Long Island Democrat, May 12, 1896 2:3
8. *ibid.* May 19, 1896 3:1



Top: Washington (160th) St. terminus looking south from Jamaica Ave. on April 8, 1915
Bottom: Iron bridge over LIRR tracks, 160th St., completed by trolley company in Dec. 1896. View taken Dec. 1922
(Both from R. Presbrey)

The chief efforts of the company during May, June and July were devoted to obtaining the franchise for Jamaica Ave. through to Queens and Hempstead. On April 28th President Hart appeared before the Queens County Board of Supervisors and announced that his company was ready and willing to extend its lines over the proposed route. Now that the county owned Jamaica Ave., contracts had just been let to pave the highway and both the county and the residents along the road were anxious that a trolley line should be finished before the paving began. Jamaica Ave. was then 18 ft. wide and there was some discussion about widening to 25 ft. For some time mass meetings had been held in Queens and Hicksville to secure the extension of the trolley from Brooklyn to Queens Village.(1) The trolley company had no trouble in gathering signatures of consent from 90% of the residents. The Long Island Electric Railway was not the only one interested in getting the franchise for Jamaica Ave. Benjamin Norton, former president of the Atlantic Avenue R.R. Co., then a BRT subsidiary, offered to construct the road within 30 days after getting a permit. The Nassau Electric Railroad was equally anxious to build east from Jamaica.(2)

On May 20th a public hearing was held on the proposed line and President Hart of the company admitted that the residents along the line were the first to influence the company to build onward to Hempstead instead of stopping at Jamaica. Owing to the fact that the route would not be a paving one for years, his company had hesitated at first, but would build the line provided no contribution was asked of it.(3) On June 10th the franchise was unanimously granted to the L.I. Electric Railway for a line to Hempstead. According to the terms of the franchise, a double track was to be laid in the middle of the street from Jamaica to Queens, and a single track on the north side of the road from Queens to Hempstead. The company had to agree to pave and macadamize Jamaica Ave. for 37 ft. throughout its length, and the county would thereafter maintain it except for the strip between the rails.(4) The company also had to agree to pay 2% of its gross receipts on the section now in Queens County after 10 years of operation, and 3% after 20 years.(5) The last necessary franchise was granted July 9th, 1896 for the stretch inside the village of Jamaica from 160th St. to 168th St., the section already occupied by the BRT's Jamaica trolley line. The village required the company to keep the paving in repair, charge not more than a 5 cent fare from Queens to Jamaica; cars had to be run at least once each way each hour of the day, and all grading changes were to be made at the company's expense; finally, the road to Hempstead had to be in operation by October 1, 1897. President Hart expressed his satisfaction with the terms and assured the authorities that his rails would keep pace with the paving gang on Jamaica Ave.(6)

While all this negotiation was going on, construction was continuing. All along Liberty Ave. the span wires were being strung, and grading was being pushed on lower New York Ave. The company also made an offer to purchase some open land on South St. for a car barn, but was refused.(7) The company had to operate cars very soon or lose its franchise, yet there was no power house to supply

1. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, April 21, 1896 5:1; April 28, 1896 5:2,
Long Island Democrat, May 5, 1896 3:2
2. Long Island Democrat, April 28, 1896 2:1
3. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 20, 1896 4:5
4. ibid. June 10, 1896 1:2
5. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, June 12, 1896 3:2
6. ibid. July 10, 1896 8:1
7. Long Island Democrat. June 9, 1896 3:2

the necessary current; there was only one thing to do, and that was to buy the power from the B.R.T.'s Jamaica Ave. line. An agreement was concluded and poles and wires were erected along Lefferts Ave. to bring the current to the new Liberty Ave. line.(1)

The last weeks of June were occupied in laying track in Washington St. (160th St.) and in building the new iron bridge over the L.I.R.R. In laying the tracks on 160th St., it was found necessary to raise the grade of the street from 2 to 5 feet for a distance of 300 feet, a change that worked a hardship on abutting property owners.(2) On July 9th the company submitted to the town a plan of the new bridge containing roadway and new sidewalks, and expressed the hope that the bridge would be ready by August 1st, a foolish hope as time proved. During this same week the L.I.R.R. at last agreed to let the Long Island Electric cross its tracks at grade at Ozone Park and at South St. Jamaica, after nearly two years of stubborn opposition.(3)

The great extension of the company's routes caused it to increase its capital \$200,000 to meet construction costs.(4) By July 14th the tracks in 160th St. had been laid, completing the line through to Brooklyn except for the bridge over the L.I.R.R.(5) In the next 10 days one trolley car, possibly two, were delivered, and on Saturday, July 25, 1896, the first car made the trip from Crescent Ave. Brooklyn to the bridge on 160th St.(6) The hopes of two years were at last fulfilled! Just the day before, the car had arrived at Liberty Ave. from the Brill plant in Philadelphia on a huge truck. The opening seems to have taken place with none of the fanfare usual on such an occasion. There were no bands, parades, speeches or other ceremonies; no one seems to have thought of taking a picture; at least none are known. On the first trip \$38 was taken in - a goodly sum for one lone car!(7)

The line had scarcely opened when service was interrupted on July 30th by the burning out of the main switch box on the Lefferts Ave. cable. Lightning struck the pole during a severe electrical storm and the wires had to be restrung all over again.(8)

Work got under way during this same week on the incline at the Brooklyn line. The iron work was being done by the Phoenix Iron Bridge Co., and its workmen began laying the foundations for the piers. It was hoped to have the tracks laid by Sept. 1, but once again construction lagged. The Long Island Electric seemed unable to meet a deadline these days; something always interfered! ,

Now that the company had a trolley on its hands, the necessity of a shop and car barn made itself felt, so the company negotiated for a piece of land on what was then the Myers farm on South St. Foundations were to be erected for a building 540 feet long and costing \$200,000, housing a power unit, general office, car barn, and repair shop, but the deal fell through and nothing was built until the following spring. Probably the cars were kept outdoors all winter for lack of shelter.

1. Long Island Democrat, June 16, 1896 2:6
2. ibid. June 16, 1896 3:3
3. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 10, 1896 8:1
4. Long Island Democrat, June 23, 1896 3:6
5. ibid. July 14, 1896 3:3
6. ibid. July 28, 1896 3:1
7. ibid. August 4, 1896 3:1
8. ibid. August 4, 1896 2:3

Beginning August 4, 1896 the trolleys ordered several months before began to be delivered at the rate of one each week. Altogether 60 double truck two-motor cars were on order.(1) By the end of August four trolleys in all were on hand and in regular operation on a 15 minute headway along Liberty Ave. The papers remark that the line was well patronized.(2)

Track laying was being pushed rapidly these sunny Summer days in two directions; east along Jamaica Ave., and south down New York Ave. In Hollis the residents became so enthusiastic at the prospect of trolley service that they held a vocal and instrumental concert to raise money for an opening day celebration.(3) Arrangements were made to light up all the houses and to erect a large grandstand in front of Carpenter's Tavern on the corner of 187th Place and Jamaica Ave., a colonial landmark that lasted till 1930. The mayor of Hollis reportedly was preparing a speech of welcome.(4) Unfortunately this celebration- the only one ever proposed in the trolley's honor- never happened. Construction lagged, and by the time the first trolley appeared the following Spring the enthusiasm of the Hollisites had cooled.

Along New York Ave. the first trolley began running as far as Baisley Blvd. beginning Sept. 1, 1896, but on Sundays only.(5) On the corner of Baisley Blvd. stood the Palace Hotel, and the proprietor set up a trolley time table in the lobby for the benefit of the Springfield farmers who came to see and ride the new cars.

The slowness of the work on the new Washington St. bridge over the L.I.R.R. was proving a thorn in the side of the L.I. Electric management. Passengers, instead of riding into the heart of town at Jamaica Ave., had to walk from St. Monica's church a block to the avenue. There seemed no prospect of an early opening, so the company, in desperation, tried to lay track on the old wooden bridge on August 15th, but the village authorities sent a force of deputies to stop the work.(6) No doubt if the company had been permitted to lay its rail the iron bridge would never have been put up! During the week of the 25th heavy timbers arrived for the construction work and labor on the stone piers started.(7) Having been balked once in its attempt to capture the wooden bridge, the company formally petitioned to use it, but the town refused.(8)

The company had difficulty about this time getting ready cash for meeting the payroll, and this delayed the iron work on both the bridge and the incline at city line.(9) The first to suffer from the company's financial embarrassment were the motormen and conductors, whose wages were reduced from \$2 to \$1.75 daily.(10)

The track laying along Jamaica Ave. under the direction of Contractor Bowker, reached 187th Place, Hollis, by Oct. 13, 1896, the point where the celebration was to take place. The track gang was then laying rail at the rate of 600 ft. a day, a pace that would carry the tracks to Queens by Nov. 1. As the track was laid, the macadamizing of the road followed close behind, producing a fine new

1. Long Island Democrat, Aug.4, 1896 3:2; Brooklyn Eagle, July 23, 1896 4:2
2. Long Island Democrat August 11, 1896 3:2
3. ibid, August 18, 1896 2:3
4. ibid, August 18, 1896 2:3
5. ibid. Sept. 1, 1896 3:1
6. ibid. Aug.18, 1896 3:4
7. ibid. Aug.25, 1896 3:1
8. ibid. Sept. 22, 1896 3:4
9. ibid. Sept. 15, 1896 3:2
10. ibid. Sept. 22, 1896 3:1

highway through the heart of the county; a far cry from the ruts and holes of turnpike days.(1) On Oct. 30th a load of 1000 ties and two carloads of rails arrived in Hollis from Philadelphia, enough to push the line to Bellaire.(2) On Nov. 10th we hear that the track passed 190th St. and five new carloads of rails arrived on the 11th to provide track right through Bellaire.(3) By Dec. 8th the tracks reached Bellaire and only a little more rail was needed to reach Queens, the goal for 1896.(4)

On Nov. 7th a large gang of men went to work on the Washington St. bridge erecting the iron girders, each of which was 35 ft. long and 4 ft. wide. By the 24th the bridge was nearly completed (5) and by Christmas was apparently in use.

When winter shut down operations, the company could look with satisfaction on the accomplishments of the 1896 season:

1. Laying track and wiring all along Liberty Ave. and operating this route with four cars.
2. Laying track and wiring and putting into operation the Rockaway route as far as Baisley Blvd.
3. Completion of the iron bridge over the LIRR at 160th St.
4. Installation of track on Jamaica Ave. as far as 200th St., Bellaire.

The year 1897 continued the slow but steady pace of 1896, but with this difference: the company was so far behind in its schedules and promises to the town authorities and to the public that it pushed construction all through the winter months, an unusual procedure in those days of heavy snows and storms. The town fathers were getting impatient, and even some of the franchises were in danger of forfeit for lack of operation. In fact on Jan. 12, 1897, the Queens Board of Supervisors announced that they were suspending the franchise of the Long Island Electric for lack of construction on Jamaica Ave. within the time called for by the terms of the franchise.(6) However, when the property was put up at auction on the 26th not a single bidder showed up. A letter from President Hart arrived instead stating that if more time were given the company, the construction would be finished quickly. Unable to do anything else, the Supervisors reluctantly complied.(7) It was a narrow escape!

The management bent its first efforts to finishing the Rockaway line. During the week of Jan. 10, a gang of men was at work grading New York Ave. in the part where the tracks had been laid so as to make the street passable to wagon travel.(8) On Jan. 15th Contractor Hogan brought a gang of men and carts from Red Bank, N.J. and set them to work grading the Rockaway Turnpike (9), a difficult job in those days, for the road was then only a foot above the level of the surrounding swamp, and tons of fill had to be dumped to give the roadbed a firm foundation. In the last week of January a heavy snowfall interrupted the work, but by the week of Feb. 21 the filling operation was resumed and rails had been distributed from Baisley Blvd. southward. The new schedule called for opening on the

1. L.I. Democrat Oct. 13, 1896 3:4	8. L.I. Democrat, Jan. 12, 1897 3:1
2. ibid. Nov. 3, 1896 2:4	9. L.I. Democrat, Jan. 13, 1897 4:3
3. ibid. Nov. 10, 1896 2:4 & Nov. 17, 1896 2:3	
4. ibid. Dec. 8, 1896 2:3	
5. ibid. Nov. 10, 1896 3:2 & Nov. 24, 1896 3:1	
6. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Jan. 12, 1897 4:4	
7. ibid. Jan. 27, 1897 5:2	



Top: No. 306 on 160th St. in June 1933, saw service on Metropolitan St. Ry., Second Ave. RR, L.I. Electric and Jamaica Central Rys. All were scrapped by New York & Queens in 1934 (Frank Goldsmith)

Bottom: No. 310 of same series at Cedar Manor barn in 1932.
(George Votava)

1st of May.(1) On March 1, 1897 the company began to negotiate for a trolley terminal in Far Rockaway, and fixed on a site just north of and adjoining the LIRR station. This site was owned by one Peter Strauss, and the company found it so difficult to come to terms with him that condemnation proceedings were considered. Meanwhile the engineering firm of Thomas D. Smith & Son made the survey and established the grade in the Far Rockaway village limits, and contractor Hogan began distributing ties, rails, and other material along the route.(2) On the 7th, track laying started from the Rockaway end just beyond the terminal land, for no agreement had as yet been reached with Mr. Strauss. Poles were set up at the same time.(3)

The track layers on New York Ave. were slower than their Far Rockaway colleagues. The rails were installed south from Baisley Blvd. the week of March 28th.(4) By April 6th the track was in place to the Rockaway Road.(5) Several small creeks crossed the old turnpike, and on the 14th of April heavy yellow pine timbers were delivered to bridge these swampy streams.(6) On Sunday May 2nd hourly service was begun as far as Springfield village, where Farmers Blvd. crosses New York Avenue.(7)

While all this was going on, progress was equally brisk in the Jamaica-Queens area. As early as Feb. 15th new ties were distributed along Bellaire and Queens Village by contractor Van Allen, but were being stolen as fast as they arrived.(8)

During the last days of March work was resumed on the track laying in Bellaire and by April 6th the rails had almost reached Callister's Corners (212th St.), the terminal in Queens. Meanwhile the pavers had finished macadamizing between and along the rails as far as 187th Place, Hollis.(9) With the road along Jamaica Ave. virtually finished, only two things remained; to get the BRT's permission to use their tracks between 160th and 168th Sts. and to get a car on the new tracks to help string wire. By an agreement dated April 26th, 1897, the company acquired the right to use the BRT tracks and to lay the necessary curves and switches at 160th and at 168th Sts. The conditions were as follows:

1. The L.I. Electric was not to have the right to use any BRT siding or establish a new one along the line.
2. The L.I. Electric was not to operate more than six cars per hour in each direction per day.
3. The L.I. Electric was to pay \$1,200 per year trackage rent plus 10 cents per car mile for each car using the tracks.
4. No trolley was to be more than 40 ft. long.
5. Not less than a 10 cent fare or 22 tickets for \$1 must be charged by the L.I. Electric.(10)
6. The BRT had the right to run special excursions and express cars over the L.I. Electric tracks to Far Rockaway.
7. The agreement could be terminated on 90 days' notice.(11)

1. L.I. Democrat, Jan. 13, 1897 4:3
2. ibid. March 2, 1897 3:5
3. ibid. March 9, 1897 3:5
4. ibid. March 30, 1897 3:2
5. ibid. April 6, 1897 3:5
6. ibid. April 29, 1897 3:1
7. ibid. May 4, 1897 3:1
8. ibid. Feb. 16, 1897 3:1
9. ibid. April 6, 1897 2:3

10. This sounds contradictory, but is so stated in the reports
11. Report of the PSC for 1913, vol. V, pp. 593-600

This agreement was to go into effect on June 1, but if the L.I. Electric had waited until then the franchise would have lapsed, so the company decided on a trick. At 2:30 A.M. on Sunday May 2nd, when all the village lay asleep, two cars, one passenger and one construction, were very quietly hauled about 40 feet over the cobblestones from the end of the L.I. Electric tracks in 160th St. to the BRT Jamaica Ave. track. The work was done with blocks and pulleys in less than an hour, but this interval was sufficient for the BRT dispatcher at 168th St. to phone the car barn and give the alarm. No less a person than President Rossiter himself, of the BRT, took command of the situation. He rushed to the Ridgewood barns, put every motorman on duty in a trolley, and the fleet of 14 cars roared down Myrtle Ave. and Jamaica Ave., intent on blocking the tracks in Jamaica. The L.I. Electric workmen, meanwhile, had gotten the two trolleys on the track and rolled on to 168th St. and the new L.I. Electric track. The cars had no sooner crossed over than the big BRT fleet hove in sight -but by the time the Ridgewood men reached 168th St. the two L.I. Electric cars were slipping into the distance; two minutes had made the difference!(1)

The most amazing thing about the whole escapade is the calm and sporting manner in which the BRT took its defeat. After all, the L.I. Electric was totally dependent upon them for its power supply, and the Brooklyn company could easily have revenged itself by snipping a few wires and ending all L.I. Electric service. Good relations between the two companies seem to have been unimpaired.

All during the week of May 2nd the construction car was busy stringing the wire between 168th St. and 212th St. On the following Sunday, May 9th, the line was opened to the public with the one passenger car riding up and down the avenue filled with crowds of curious farmers. By evening 1200 persons had paid fares and the company grossed \$50.(2) By the end of the month the switches at Washington St. (160th St.) had been installed and through cars could run to Queens.

In April the incline at City Line was also completed, an improvement that no other trolley line could boast of, and considered the last word in terminal facilities. The work had been slowed down late in 1896 by the slowness in the delivery of iron. Then a more serious disaster occurred in the shape of bankruptcy on the part of the Kings County Elevated R.R. The trolley lines in Brooklyn were giving the "L" heavy competition and the elevated railroad was forced into receivership. That meant that the half share of the incline's cost could not be met, and it devolved on the L.I. Electric Company to pay the whole \$40,000.(3) The management reluctantly assumed the burden and work was begun anew, this time day and night from mid-February onward.(4) Fresh delays of all kinds interrupted the work, but on Saturday April 24th, 1897, the incline was at last opened and the first trolley ascended from Liberty Avenue to the City Line station.(5) No ceremony seems to have been arranged, but the comfort and convenience of the arrangement brought the L.I. Electric considerable notice and favorable comment. The incline, 16 feet wide and supporting one track, occupied the middle of Liberty Avenue. It began just west of Bayside Cemetery at a point about 1000 feet from the Brooklyn line. The low level eastern end was an inclined plane of solid masonry; the higher western end consisted of a steel framework that rose

1. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 4, 1897
L.I. Democrat, May 4, 1897 3:3
2. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 13, 1897 14:7
L.I. Democrat, May 18, 1897 3:1
3. L.I. Democrat, Apr. 20, 1897 3:4
4. ibid. Feb. 23, 1897 3:3
and Apr. 6, 1897 3:5
5. ibid. Apr. 27, 1897 3:2

in a gentle grade until it met the "L" structure at Drew St.

The cars using the incline turned out of the westbound track on Liberty Avenue and moved up the incline; to accommodate both steam trains and trolleys on the same platform, a simple terminal arrangement was effected. The City Line station had a center platform flanked on either side by "L" tracks. The trolley track, leading in from Queens, ran along the middle of the "L" structure between the two elevated railroad tracks, and ended abruptly at the station platform. At this point the trolley passengers dismounted to a board platform on track level, climbed a little staircase to "L" platform level, bought a ticket at a little booth, and boarded the Kings County "L" cars for the bridge. By this simple arrangement the trolleys and "L" trains in no way interfered with each other's operations.(1)

With the completion of the incline, through uninterrupted service was inaugurated from Grant Ave. Brooklyn to 212th St. Queens. Only the Far Rockaway line remained uncompleted and the company turned all its efforts to completing the stretch along the swamps so that the road might earn needed money during the coming summer season. The track laying was rushed along the Rockaway Road, but required considerable leveling and ballasting because of the soft, swampy nature of the ground. All during April this work went on; by May 1st the poles for the wires had been raised. On all other routes a double row of wooden poles supported the span and trolley wires, but along the Rockaway Road single poles, fitted with brackets, carried the feed wire.(2) At last, on Sunday June 6th, the first car triumphantly rolled into Far Rockaway.(3) Even then there was no terminal; some time in June the Railway company and Mr. Strauss must have come to an agreement, for during the week of Aug. 1st the railway began erecting a depot and laid two inside tracks for loading and unloading of cars.(4) With this work accomplished, the construction of the L.I. Electric Railway was now complete as far as the directors were concerned.

At first the company kept secret its intention to abandon all other routes for which it had been given franchises; then gradually the news leaked out. On May 10th, 1897, the company sent an informal notice to the Queens County Board of Supervisors that it was not going to build on Hempstead Turnpike from Queens to Hempstead, as it had promised.(5) The L.I. Electric was clearly in the wrong in this matter, for the franchise for Jamaica Ave. expressly specified construction through to Hempstead. Refusal was a breach of faith that could be justified only by a financial inability to continue building. The Supervisors were understandably angry and began legal action. The company depended upon the various franchises it had received to secure it in possession of the road and the actual operation of the trolleys gave the company a legal advantage. On May 15th the Supervisors adopted a resolution to revoke the company's charter. The company replied that it would have built through to Hempstead if the trustees of that village had not discouraged investors by trying to force the company to make the Hempstead terminal "in the poorest and most dangerous section of the village." Just what area this was is not explained!(6) Some days later President Hart added that burden-

1. From eyewitness account of ramp operation by Nelson Abrams, Ass't enginehouse foreman, and Edward Senkbeil, machinist, of L.I.R.R. Morris Park Shop.
2. L.I. Democrat, May 4, 1897 3:6
3. ibid. June 8, 1897 3:2
4. ibid. Aug. 3, 1897 3:2
5. ibid. May 11, 1897 3:5
6. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 16, 1897 21:5

some restrictions as to paving the streets and maintaining them in repair had been imposed by the Hempstead officials, and the company had felt bound to reject them.(1) Whether these explanations satisfied the Supervisors is doubtful; at any rate, the legal steps undertaken to force the L.I. Electric off the highway failed, for the controversy is not mentioned again in the records. The truth of the matter no doubt lies in the company's heavy expenditures for 1897. Paving three miles of Jamaica Ave., besides laying a double track, must have been costly even then - and the company was in no financial condition to build further. All the promises, all the visionary schemes of a trolley network into Nassau County were shipwrecked on the hard rock of financial reality. From this time forward we hear nothing more about ambitious extensions eastward.

The trolleysthata the company had ordered were coming in steadily all during the year, and there was as yet no place to store them. In addition, the company could not go on indefinitely buying its power from the BRT. Early in 1897 the company resolved to build a combined car barn and power station. In the week of May 4th the company's surveyors finished laying out a triangular plot of land on New York Ave. and Linden Blvd. for a barn and generator. The area was called Cedar Manor, and the newly purchased property had formerly been part of the Meyer farm. The foundations were already poured for the new building which was to be 87 feet long and 113 feet wide. The boiler was to be 60 x 87 feet, and the machinery and storage room 50 x 87 feet. The boilers were already on the property just waiting to be set up.(2) By June the work was nearly finished and President Hart invited Receiver James Jourdan of the Kings County El.Ry. to inspect the plant. High hopes were entertained. Rumor had it that the generators would turn out power not only for the L.I. Electric routes, but also enough to electrify the Fulton St. "L" and the Franklin Ave. extension!(3) On July 3, 1897 the new power house opened. It was then delivering 400 HP, and the capacity was to be raised to 1200 HP as soon as additional machinery arrived.(4)

The autumn of 1897 saw the last details of construction brought to a successful conclusion. During the week of August 10th the second track on Jamaica Ave. between 168th St. and Queens was put into operation, and the two tracks were connected with the BRT rails for through operation of cars by Dec. 14th.(5) One small change of route was also made during the fall; instead of running along 105th Ave. and 148th St. on the Liberty Ave. line, the company asked for and received permission to run straight through Waltham St. between Liberty Ave. and South St. This eliminated two right angle curves on the route. The change-over was made on Nov. 15th, 1897, and the company tore out its old rails and repaved the streets as part of the bargain.(6) During October and November the labor of paving Jamaica Ave. east to 212th St. was completed at last at the company's expense. For the first time in history Jamaica Ave. became a paved road and an important factor in the growth of central Queens.(7)

1. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 20, 1897 5:4

2. L.I. Democrat, May 4, 1897 3:6

3. ibid. June 29, 1897 3:5

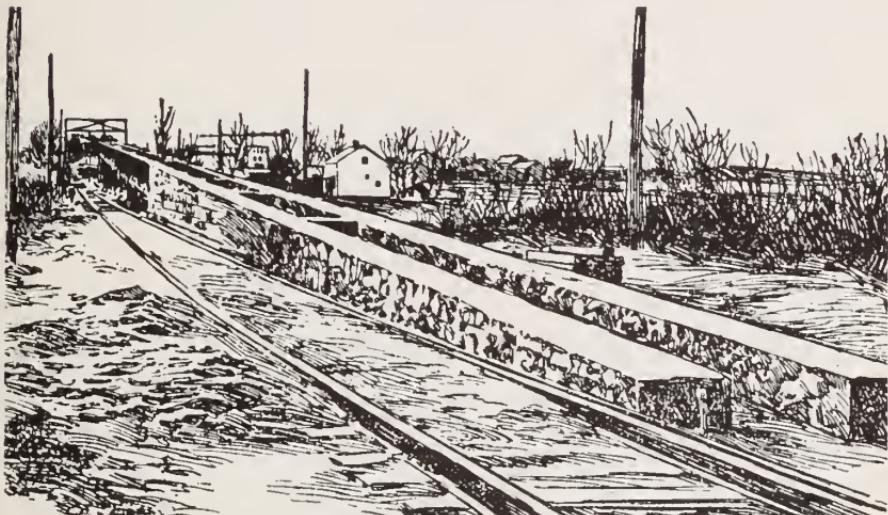
4. ibid. July 6, 1897 3:3

5. ibid. Aug. 10, 1897 3:2 and Dec. 14, 1897 3:1

6. L.I. Democrat, Oct. 19, 1897 3:3; also Report of the PSC for 1913, vol. V,

7. L.I. Democrat, Nov. 2, 1897 3:2 and Nov. 9, 1897 3:2 (pp. 593-600)

As the last days of 1897 drew to a close, the directors, employees, and the riding public beamed with pride and a sense of high accomplishment at the successful construction and operation of the new road. Central Queens had a trolley line of its own at last, bringing a new life and vitality to the once drowsy little suburban village of Jamaica. Home development and commerce could grow for the first time with the assurance of rapid transit, and the little villages of central Queens were at last linked together by the shiny new rails of the Long Island Electric.



Top: Liberty Ave. ramp at City Line which carried L.I. Electric cars up to "L" platform, 4-4-97 to 4-1-01
 Bottom: Looking west along Liberty Ave. from 78th St. on June 24, 1914. Construction of "L" extension had shut down one trolley track. (R. Presbrey)

THE EARLY YEARS

With the long work of construction disposed of in 1897, the company settled down to routine operation. A general survey of operations on the line in 1898 is worthwhile at this point in our story.

The Long Island Electric maintained its offices at the north-east corner of 160th St. and South St., a central location where all the routes met and from which operations could be well supervised. On the ground floor was a ticket office, and here a young lady sold tickets through to Far Rockaway or Brooklyn. It was the intention of the company in these early days to build a big terminal for the cars on this same corner, but the idea never got beyond the paper stage. In 1897 we hear from the papers that President Hart leased of one Walter Jones a plot of ground on 160th St. for a ten year period, with the privilege of buying at any time, and that a depot was to be erected at once -but unfortunately the purchase was never made.(1) Such a terminal would have been an enormous help thirty years later when traffic at the 160th St. corner made trolley operation slow and difficult. During the same month of November, 1897, President Hart was considering building a waiting room for the passengers on the ground floor of the company's office building, and this was done in 1898.(2)

The rolling stock of the company was all new these days. The company reported 25 cars in operation by September, 1897; from the newspapers of the time it is possible to record the date of delivery of each car, but not the number, unfortunately:

- 1 on July 24, 1896
- 1 on August 4, 1896
- 2 by August 11, 1896
- "12 new cars expected this week" Nov. 10th, 1896
- 2 on Feb. 9th, 1897 "higher than usual with enclosed platform and cross seats" (sold to Steinway Ry. on Nov. 9th, 1897)
- 2 the week of May 4th, 1897
- 2 the week of May 14th, 1897
- 4 "large new vestibule cars" on July 6, 1897
- 2 "closed short cars" on October, 1897
- "Several new cars" on December 28, 1897
- 5 open cars on July 5, 1898 "making 30 open cars altogether"

The color scheme the company adopted was probably the most impractical imaginable, however attractive it might have been when new; white, with gold leaf trimmings! Later, when the company was bought out by the New York & North Shore Ry. in 1899, dark red seems to have been substituted.

Operations during this first year are interesting. By the fall of 1897 the total trackage of the company was 17 miles, and it operated a fleet of about 25 cars, manned by 45 employees. In this first year the line carried 279,320 passengers. Despite this number

1. Long Island Democrat, Nov. 2, 1897 3:2
2. ibid. November 20, 1897 :6

the company went into debt, for it earned only \$15,341 and had to pay out \$19,903 for wages, taxes, rentals, etc., leaving a deficit of \$4562. Constant improvement was going on at this time, nevertheless. In one year (1897-98) \$600,000 of equipment and maintenance was invested, and 8 new trolleys arrived, raising the total to 33. In 1898 the passenger load doubled, reaching 735,567, but this increase still failed to offset operating costs, and the road again went into the red for \$11,415. There were now 50 employees with a payroll of \$33,290. There was a change of organization as well during this year. Charles A. Porter of Philadelphia succeeded to the vice-presidency, and William L. Wood (formerly cashier of the Jamaica Savings Bank) to the post of treasurer. G.C. Smith was made general superintendent.(1)

Most of the revenue these days came from the Liberty Ave. line. The ride took 40 minutes and the fare was 5 cents to 168th St., Jamaica. At this point the conductor came around and collected a second nickel from passengers riding to 212th St. The route totalled 8-3/4 miles, and the cars maintained a 20 minutes headway. The Far Rockaway route, always the most unique on Long Island, grossed heavily during the busy summer season, but during the long nine months of winter ran a deficit. The line was nine miles long, for which the company collected a 20 cent fare. Scarcely anyone lived along the line south of Baisley Blvd.; down to as late as 1915 there were scarcely 20 houses between New York Blvd. and Inwood - and these included fishing shacks. Only the two villages at either end produced any revenue for the company. It is remarkable that the management bothered to maintain even a 30 minute headway on the line in winter. During June, July and August, however, trolleys ran two and three together to carry the crowds; and on Sundays even this was unequal to the traffic. On Sundays motormen made 4 round trips a day and turned in as much as \$60 a day.(2) On Labor Day 1898 Supt. Hogan reported that the cars carried about 10,000 people to Far Rockaway - an incredible figure!(3)

During the years 1897 and 1898 the company was faced with months of unpleasant litigation over the improvement in which it took the most pride - the City Line incline. We have spoken some pages back of its opening on April 24, 1897. Four days before, the company found itself involved in a law suit because of the structure. The incline itself was a masonry and steel structure in the middle of Liberty Avenue. It so happened that the incline, over a stretch of 103 feet, faced the farm land of Mr. Luke Eldert, a large landowner at the Brooklyn line, and the person after whom Eldert's Lane is named today. He had bitterly opposed the building of the incline in the first place, and began suit promptly to get it removed on the ground that it was an eyesore and public nuisance, cut off light and obstructed access to his property. Other property owners backed him financially during the long court battle. On April 24, 1897 the directors had to appear in court before the Queens County Grand Jury on a nuisance charge.(4) On May 15th the court dismissed Mr. Eldert's \$25,000 damage claim and injunction petition.(5) Mr. Eldert took his case to the Supreme Court on November 17, 1897(6)

1. The Eagle Almanac for 1897 and 1898
Report of the L.I. Electric to the RR Commission, 1897, 1898
2. Long Island Democrat, July 31, 1900 3:2,
3. ibid. September 13, 1898 3:1
4. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, April 20, 1897 4:5
5. Long Island Democrat, May 18, 1897 2:3
6. ibid. Nov. 16, 1897 3:1

On Jan. 3, 1898 the court handed down a decision against the company, holding that the operation of the incline was illegal on the part of a surface road, and that it was beyond the powers of the Highway Commissioners to grant such a permit. The railway promptly sought and obtained a stay of execution. (1) On March 25th, 1898 the railway secured a hearing at which its counsel brought out the curious argument that, since the incline was actually in the air, it therefore could not be on Mr. Eldert's property, and that since the court's previous order stated that only that portion of the incline trespassing on Mr. Eldert's land must come down, the ruling had no application. (2) This ingenious argument convinced no one, and on April 19th 1898, the Appellate Division affirmed the November decision of the Supreme Court against the company. (3) In some way the company must have evaded the court's order to demolish the incline in 30 days, for one year later, on April 25, 1899, we hear of the Board of Improvements of Queens Co. making a personal inspection of the condemned incline. (4) On May 7th the company placed at the board's disposal the private car of the president, and after inspecting the incline the company took the inspectors to Far Rockaway and treated them to a shore dinner. Everywhere they were afforded every courtesy, and carried back to Jamaica. (5) What decision the inspectors made is not mentioned in the papers of the day, but it must have been sufficiently favorable to delay the demolition of the incline, for there were no new developments in the case all during 1899 and 1900. Finally the court forced the Long Island Electric to comply. (6) Demolition began the week of April 7th, 1901, so it is reasonable to suppose that the last car used the incline to the "L" about April 1st. (7)

Thus, after a stormy career of four years, the pride and joy of the company succumbed to the hammer and the torch. During this period the ramp had a rather fine safety record, with few accidents. On Dec. 16, 1898, car 450, while descending the incline, broke a flange and jumped the track, nearly toppling over into the street; the conductor kept his head and induced everyone to stay seated until lights were secured and the frightened passengers were led back to the "L" platform. (8) A month later, when another car was descending the incline, the motorman was amazed to see a team of horses and a wagon coming up. It seems that the driver had fallen asleep and the horses, left to themselves, followed the car tracks halfway up before meeting the trolley! In backing the team, the animals took fright and horses and wagon toppled off to the street below. (9) One other derailment, again at night, occurred on March 8, 1899, but caused no trouble. With the disappearance of the City Line incline in 1901, service to Grant Ave. ceased and the cars turned back at a switch between Drew and Forbell Sts. on the Brooklyn line, two blocks from the present Grant Ave. "L" station. This switch and the track had formerly been unused storage track beneath the incline, but was now the main line terminus.

1. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Jan.4, 1898 3:3	9. <i>ibid.</i> Jan.17, 1899
2. Long Island Democrat, Mar.29, 1898 2:2	3:5
3. <i>ibid.</i> April 26, 1898 3:6	
4. <i>ibid.</i> April 25, 1899 2:3	
5. <i>ibid.</i> May 9, 1899 3:4	
6. <i>ibid.</i> Feb.5, 1901 3:3	
7. <i>ibid.</i> Apr. 9, 1901 3:1	
8. <i>ibid.</i> Dec.20, 1898 3:4	

The Long Island Electric company in these days derived an additional source of income from trolley freight and express deliveries. On April 26, 1897 the company signed an agreement with the National Express Company of Brooklyn, permitting that company to run its express cars over the Long Island Electric routes.(1) This organization already had a fleet of its own trolleys operating in Brooklyn. During the week of May 23, 1897, a switch was laid at the corner of Jamaica Ave. and 160th St. (southwest quadrant) so that cars coming from Brooklyn could run south into 160th St.(2) The first express cars had scarcely taken advantage of the new contract when legal difficulties cropped up in the form of an injunction against the two companies, brought by Mr. Aaron de Grauw, the wealthiest and most influential man in Jamaica at that time. Mr. de Grauw owned property in 160th St., and objected to what he termed a freight car railroad passing his property. The court refused to grant the injunction.(3) The case dragged on in the courts all during 1898 and 1899 until on October 3, 1899 the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court ruled that all surface railroads in Brooklyn and Queens had the right to carry packages as freight.(4) Readers of the story of the New York & Queens County Ry. will remember that it was this same Aaron de Grauw who so long obstructed the Flushing-Jamaica trolley building.

Public relations and employee morale were not entirely neglected even at this early period. It was the company's custom, as soon as a new line was opened, to run a special excursion free for the pleasure of the residents on the route. On July 28, 1897 the first big excursion was run for the benefit of all the firemen on the Rockaway peninsula. A fleet of open cars picked up the men all along the line and carried them to Ulmer Park near Bensonhurst for the day. The Long Island Electric cars made the through trip by courtesy of the BRT.(5) On August 11th, the company ran a second excursion for the male residents of Hollis and Bellaire -this time a moonlight ride to Far Rockaway. Colored lights were strung all over the car and a hired band serenaded the guests all the way.(6) On numerous occasions the company rented open cars to excursion parties, especially church outings, club socials, etc. In a day when automobiles were nonexistent, the open trolley played a great role in mass transportation of fun-seekers.

Employees of the company seem to have been reasonably well paid and well treated. Motormen and conductors got \$1.75 a day and had fairly steady work. The summer season brought a big increase in operating personnel, but these men were usually laid off for the winter.(7)

Discipline could be firm on occasion. Once a thirsty conductor and motorman left the trolley and its passengers waiting while they got a glass of beer. One of the riders reported the men at the end of the run, and both were promptly discharged.(8)

Once a year the company gave an annual ball for all its employees.(9) There was also an annual trolley excursion to Coney Island

1. Report of the PSC for 1913, vol. V. pp. 593-600
2. Long Island Democrat, May 25, 1897 2:1
3. Long Island Democrat, June 15, 1897 3:3
4. ibid. October 10, 1899 3:3
5. ibid. July 13, 1897 3:3
6. L.I. Democrat, Aug. 17, 1897 2:6
7. ibid. Sept. 27, 1898 3:1
8. L.I. Democrat, Nov. 1, 1898 3:3
9. ibid. Feb. 7, 1899 3:1



Top: No. 107 in 160th St. Jamaica. Note bonnet sign "Electric" to distinguish them from "Traction" (N.Y.&L.I.T.) cars. Sign on right reads "Far Rockaway Cars Start Here", that on left "Belmont Park & City Line Cars Start Here". Taken April 8, 1915 (R. Presbrey)

Bottom: Last surviving L.I.E. car, one of 50-54 series, made into sand car in 1923, taken by NY&Queens in 1933, where it survived until 1938 (Seyfried)

for the men and their families.(1) The motormen and conductors organized their own clubs. In the spring of 1900 there was a baseball nine that regularly played the Jamaica police.(2) In the fall of 1900 we hear of a bowling team organized that played regularly at Gunther's Hotel on Baisley Blvd.(3)

The early Long Island Electric seems to have been fairly free of the chief worry of traction companies -thieving conductors. There was a short witch hunt for dishonest conductors in Sept. 1900; the inspectors reported many men more or less short. Some of the accused defended their innocence, while others resigned rather than pay the difference to the company.(4) However, this sort of thing was the exception rather than the rule.

The years 1898 and 1899 brought few changes to the company. The Far Rockaway terminal was improved by a stage coach service from the trolley terminal to the beach. The old Far Rockaway Village R.R., operating two horse cars in Beach 19th and 20th Sts. since 1886, was leased by the Long Island Electric.(5) Negotiations began in November 1897 and the newspapers fondly hoped that the L.I. Electric would rejuvenate the old line, which was described as follows: "The property consists of a few pounds of old iron encumbering the main business street of the village, and three or four old ram-shackle things on wheels called cars." For some unknown reason the L.I. Electric failed to buy the line, and leased, instead, Wynn Bros. Stages for transporting its riders to the beach.(6) Traffic to Rockaway, meanwhile, had increased to such an extent that the company reduced the fare from 20 cents to 15 cents in April, 1899.(7) In June, 1899, the company petitioned the city council for an extension to run from its Mott Ave. terminal across the street into an alley, then across the Long Island Railroad tracks and into Beach 22nd St. to New Haven St.; then east along New Haven St. to Beach 20th St. (Central Ave.); down that street to New Haven St., and then east along New Haven St. and Beach 14th St. to the ocean.(8) The property owners of the village vigorously opposed the petition because the streets would be torn up during the summer season.(9) Just before the petition was presented a new rival, the Ocean Electric Railway, founded in June, bought out the old Far Rockaway Village R.R., and opposed the Long Island Electric's efforts to lay track to the beach. Since the Long Island Railroad was backing the Ocean Electric, the opposition was really formidable.(10) The City Council denied the petition and the Ocean Electric captured all the beach rights. This was the Long Island Electric's last attempt to reach the surf.

Nature, on several occasions, also made things difficult for the Rockaway line. Rockaway Blvd. at that time was scarcely a foot above the marshes, and there was constant danger from high tides. In July 1898 the company raised the roadbed and placed an additional feed wire cable on the line.(11) On Jan. 23d, 1898, the tide rose

1. L.I. Democrat, Aug. 22, 1899 3:6

2. ibid. May 1, 1900 3:1 and May 22, 1900 3:1

3. ibid. Nov. 13, 1900 3:3

4. ibid. Sept. 4, 1900 3:3

5. L.I. Democrat, Nov. 30, 1897 3:3 and June 7, 1898 3:3

6. ibid. July 12, 1898 3:5

7. L.I. Democrat, March 14, 1899 3:2

8. ibid. June 27, 1899 3:3

9. ibid. July 17, 1899 3:4

10. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 15, 1899 5:6

11. L.I. Democrat, July 12, 1898 3:5

so high that all service ceased during the hours of high tide for a whole week.(1) On Feb. 8th, 1899 the same thing happened again.(2) In fact, for many years similar high tides appeared at least once during the winter season to end service. Traffic was so light, however, that few people were inconvenienced.

The earliest schedule that has come down to us from the Long Island Electric dates from September 1898 and was for the winter season:

"Cars leave the terminus of the Brooklyn "L" for Far Rockaway from 6:00 A.M. every 40 minutes until 9:00 P.M., the last three cars leaving at 10:30, 11:30, and 12:30. Two early cars for Far Rockaway start from Jamaica at 5:04 and 5:44.

Cars for Jamaica, Hollis and Queens leave Brooklyn every 20 minutes from 5:40 A.M. to 10:00; then every half hour until 1:00 A.M. The last car runs to Jamaica only.

Cars leave Far Rockaway for Jamaica and Brooklyn from 5:41 A.M. every 20 minutes until 10:21 P.M.; the last three leaving at 11:29, 12:29, and 1:29 - the last two to Jamaica only.

Cars leave Queens for Jamaica and Brooklyn every 20 minutes from 5:40 A.M. to 10:00 P.M.; then half hourly to 12 midnight, the last three leaving at 12:40 and 1:10 A.M. running to Jamaica only.(3)

The Long Island Electric's success and prosperity had been closely watched by the other traction companies of Brooklyn and Queens, and in 1899 the Philadelphia owners of the New York & Queens decided to buy out the Electric and incorporate it into their recently launched subsidiary, the New York & North Shore Railway Co. The purchase price was rumored to be one million dollars, and this sum is very likely correct, for President Hart had refused an offer of \$800,000 from the BRT. The sale was announced on October 13, 1899.(4)

Under the terms of the merger the new company was to be called The N.Y. & North Shore Ry.Co.; the directors and financiers behind the New York & Queens and N.Y. & North Shore would now control the L.I. Electric properties, making the road a virtual subsidiary of the powerful N.Y. & Queens County Ry.Co. in Long Island City. Charles A. Porter of Philadelphia moved up from vice president to the presidency; Jacob Beetem succeeded to the post of vice-president and general manager; and A.G. Maize became secretary and treasurer. The leading director was the Philadelphian William H. Shelmordine. \$400,000 of New York & North Shore capital stock was distributed to the L.I. Electric stockholders in proportion to their holdings on surrender of their old L.I. Electric stock. \$200,000 in N.Y. & North Shore capital stock was given to the two chief stockholders, Charles A. Porter and William F. Hogan, to cancel the company's floating debt, upon their surrender to the N.Y. & North Shore of the perpetual rights to the Rockaway Turnpike.(5)

To the old Long Island Electric trackage was now added the five mile Flushing spur and 15 additional box cars. It was not until December, 1899, however, that the Flushing line was opened. It had long been the intention of the New York & Queens to operate a cross-island trolley system; with this purchase their dream became a reality. With the completion of the N.Y. & North Shore's Flushing line,

1. L.I. Democrat, Jan.25,1898 3:1
2. ibid. Feb. 14, 1899 3:1
3. ibid. Sept.27, 1898 3:6

4. ibid. Oct.17,1899 2:1 -also (2:2)
Brooklyn Daily Eagle Oct.13,1899
5. Report of L.I.Electric to PSC
for 1899

it would now be possible to begin through service between Far Rockaway and Flushing.

The first operating changes after the merger took place on Nov. 1, 1899. The fare between Jamaica and Far Rockaway was reduced from 15¢ to 10¢.(1) The Far Rockaway cars would run hereafter to 168th St. and Jamaica Ave. instead of 160th St. and South St.(2) This proved to be an unwise move, and the old terminal was restored on December 1st.(3) The headway on Jamaica and Liberty Aves. was reduced from 20 minutes to 10 minutes. The fare from Brooklyn through to Queens was reduced from 10¢ to 5¢.(4) This last concession was no doubt the result of a long battle waged by the residents of Hollis and Queens, who pointed out that the long ride from Brooklyn to Jamaica cost only 5¢, but the additional two miles to Queens cost an extra nickel. As early as April 1899 the Citizen's Improvement Ass'n. of Hollis complained to the L.I. Electric.(5) A second attempt was made in June (6); this time the case went before the Railroad Commission. Before the decision came from Albany the new management voluntarily reduced the fare to 5¢ thus ending the controversy.

This wholesale reduction of fares, especially on the long Rockaway line, was a foolish and false move that in time contributed more than anything else to the financial ruin of the company. Had these hasty and ill-considered reductions not been made, the operating deficits after 1910 could have been avoided and the company would never have fallen into the sad state that it was in when the receivers took over in 1924.

To insure steady operation, the N.Y. & North Shore management placed numerous inspectors on the line to check the schedules. The Queens route, for example, had to take exactly 23 minutes, and any motorman too early or too late was fined a day's pay for each minute off schedule !(7) To further insure good running, signals were installed on the Far Rockaway route for the first time. (8)

On March 12, 1900 through service between Flushing and Far Rockaway was instituted on a 25 minutes headway and a 15¢ fare.(9) A double track connection at Jamaica Ave. and 160th St. was built to permit such operation between March 8th and 12th, 1900.(10) On Oct. 1, 1900 the new management altered the schedule: (11)

"Cars leave Jamaica for Flushing at 15, 35 and 55 minutes after every hour from 4:55 A.M. to 11:55 P.M. Cars leave Flushing at 13, 33 and 53 minutes after every hour from 5:33 A.M. till 12:33 after midnight. All cars go through to Far Rockaway until 10:00 P.M. and thereafter till 11:53 P.M. under 40 mins. headway. The last car from Far Rockaway for Flushing leaves at 12:11 A.M."

One curious feature of the line at this time should be noted; in a day when all trolleys carried huge mustache fenders, the L.I. Electric had none at all ! (12)

1. L.I. Democrat, Oct. 31, 1899 3:4	August 1, 1899 3:6
2. ibid. Nov. 7, 1899 3:2	7. L.I. Democrat, Dec. 19, 1899 3:2
3. ibid. Dec. 5, 1899 3:1	8. ibid. Jan. 30, 1900 3:1
4. ibid. Nov. 7, 1899 3:5	9. ibid. Mar. 13, 1900 3:3
5. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Apr. 2, 1899 39:2	10. ibid. Mar. 13, 1900 3:7
6. ibid. July 24, 1899 2:2 and L.I. Dem. June 27, 1899 3:3	11. ibid. Oct. 2, 1900 3:3
	12. ibid. Sept. 18, 1900 3:3

In October 1900 the line suffered two bad accidents. On the 19th a car jumped a switch on South St., plunged into a restaurant and tore through tables and dishes till it halted in the kitchen at the rear of the building. On October 30th two cars met head-on in a fog on the single track in 160th St. before St. Monica's Church, both being hurled to the sidewalk.(1)

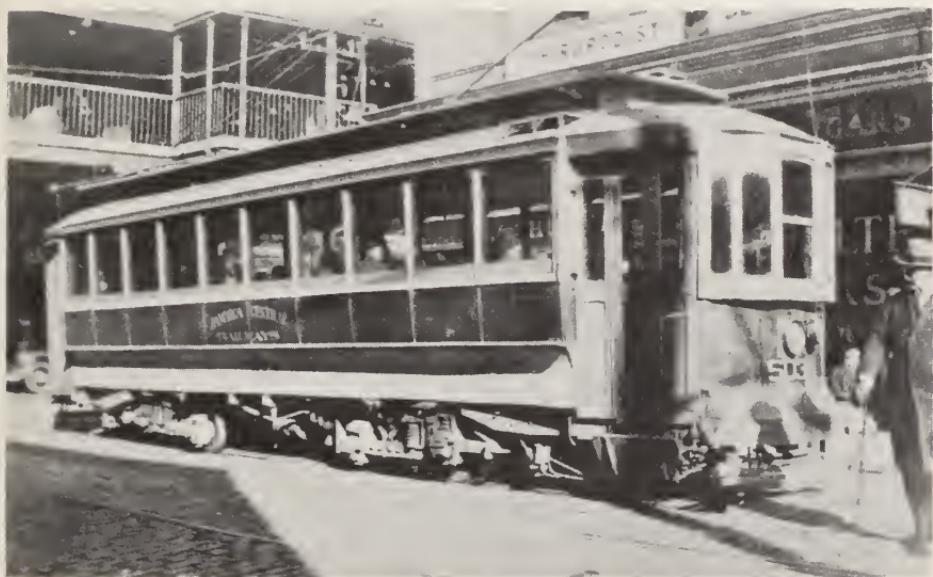
During these early years of the L.I. Electric the worst and most annoying handicap was the constant and persistent thieving of copper trolley wire from the Liberty Ave. and Far Rockaway lines. This pilfering was by no means trifling. Too often a car would start out for Far Rockaway only to discover that the wire had been cut along the lonely stretches of New York Ave. or the Rockaway Turnpike. On some occasions cars were marooned out on the line at night by cutting of the power cable behind. Most of the cuts were 400 feet or so in length, but there were times when as much as 2000 feet were stolen at one time, seriously crippling service. From the old newspapers which carefully chronicled each theft, it is possible to assess the loss. Between July 1898 and Sept. 1903, about 13,000 feet of copper wire were lost, enough for the whole Queens route. The BRT also suffered, but not as severely. Unfortunately, many miles of L.I. Electric routes were in wooded, sparsely settled areas where thieves could work unhindered. In five years the police made only two arrests.(2)

On July 1st, 1901 another change was made in the management of the L.I. Electric. Hogan Brothers, surveyors, who had done the surveying on the L.I. Electric routes and the Flushing-Jamaica line, bought the controlling interest in the L.I. Electric from the N.Y. and North Shore Ry. Co.(3) The immediate effect of this was to dis-continue the through Flushing-Far Rockaway service on August 1st.(4)

Schedules on the same line were cut; cars between Jamaica and Flushing now ran half-hourly instead of at 15 minute intervals. In the spring of 1903 the line on New York Ave. between the LIRR crossing and Linden Blvd. (carbarn area) was double-tracked.(5)

Late in 1902 the L.I. Electric began the construction of the last section of trolley route that it would ever build - the one mile link between the county line at Belmont Park and 212th St. (Callister's Corner). Readers will recall that the L.I. Electric had a franchise for Hempstead Turnpike all the way to Hempstead, but the franchise lapsed in 1897 for lack of construction. Since then the situation had changed. The N.Y. & Long Island Traction Co., chartered in 1899, had built the single track route to Hempstead along the Hempstead Tpk. that the L.I. Electric should have built. The new line opened on Sept. 11th, 1902 from Hempstead to the Queens County line only, because the company was unable to secure a franchise from New York City for the final one mile section to 212th St.(6) This left a gap between the Traction and Electric termini that greatly inconvenienced through passengers from Nassau. To remedy this, the L.I. Electric began negotiations to build the link. Short though the line was, it took nearly a year and a half to open, again because of legal obstructions. On August 1st, 1902 the first ties and rails were transported on flat cars to 212th St.(7); by Nov. 15th

1. L.I. Democrat, Oct. 23, 1900 3:3
2. Summary of 19 separate articles in the L.I. Democrat between July 12, 1898 and May 23, 1902.
3. ibid. July 2, 1901 3:2
4. ibid. Aug. 6, 1901 3:1
5. ibid. May 5, 1903 3:1 and April 28, 1903 3:2
6. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Sept. 11, 1902 10:6
7. L.I. Democrat, Aug. 5, 1902 2:3



Top: Stansbury's Lake as seen from 184th St. in 1923.
Bottom: No. 503 (one of six bought from Third Ave. system in 1927). Front differs slightly from 300's.
(Both from Wm. Lichtenstern)

the franchise had been granted and track laying was started.(1) The work had scarcely begun when an abutting property owner, Mrs. Elizabeth D. Miller, obtained a temporary injunction against the track laying on the ground that her property would be damaged with consequent financial loss, that her curb line would be injured, and that the rails would come too close to her property line.(2) In a subsequent action Mrs. Miller also demanded that the company show her a full list of all property owners' consents, and also questioned the right of the company to build a route that it had once declined.(3) The battle dragged on in the courts for five months. Finally in May, 1903, the L.I. Electric succeeded in having the injunction vacated and promptly set about completing the interrupted track laying.(4) By the first of June the work was done except for the crossing of the L.I.R.R.(5) The trolley poles and wiring had not yet been installed, but rather than delay any further, the company began operating a single horse car as a shuttle between 212th St. and Belmont Park, beginning about June 10th.(6) This may seem to be an incredibly make-shift arrangement, but the L.I. Electric officials had no choice. Months before they had applied to the Department of Gas, Water and Electricity for a permit to string wires along Hempstead Tpk., but month after month dragged by without a reply. At last the company, in desperation, obtained an order from a Justice of the Supreme Court, directing the City department to show cause why the permit should not be granted.(7) As soon as the papers were served, the L.I. Electric went ahead stringing wires, without waiting for a reply. The City department countered by arresting General Manager Hogan for unauthorized construction. September and October passed with the deadlock unbroken.(8)

Meanwhile, public unrest was increasing because of the delay.(9) Not only was the horse car absurdly inadequate, but during the week of Jan. 5-12, the car failed to run at all because of deep snow.(10) In Mid-February the city yielded at last and issued the long overdue permit. On Feb. 12th, 1901, the company began stringing the wires and on Feb. 13th the first electric trolley operation began.(11) At last through trolley service between New York and Hempstead was a reality.

In these early years (1898-1905) the company ordered and received several new trolleys. From the newspapers of the day we learn the following:

5 new vestibule cars ordered	Sept. 27th, 1898
"A number of new cars ordered from Brill"	Feb., 1899
10 new cars ordered -5 vestibule and 5 open, to be delivered by May 1st	March 18, 1902
3 new open and combination cars received	May 6th, 1902

These newspaper reports cannot easily be reconciled with the known car numbers and their dates of purchase. No doubt many orders were cancelled and many cars sold before delivery. Five open

1. L.I. Democrat, Nov. 18, 1902 3:4	8. L.I. Democrat, July 28, 1903 3:4
2. ibid. Dec. 2nd, 1902 2:2	9. ibid. Oct. 13, 1903 2:3
3. ibid. Dec. 30th, 1902 2:3	10. ibid. Jan. 12, 1904 2:4
4. ibid. May 19, 1903, 2:1 & 2:3	11. ibid. Feb. 16, 1904 2:5 and
5. ibid. June 2, 1903 3:3	Feb. 23, 1904 2:3
6. ibid. June 16, 1903 2:4	Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Feb. 15,
7. ibid. July 21, 1903 2:4	1904 1:5

double truck Brills (100-104) were delivered in September 1904, plus six closed cars (105-110). With the purchase of five new double truck convertibles (111-115) in 1905, the L.I. Electric roster was complete and remained unchanged for twenty years. There were then 22 opens and 16 closed cars, and this number of 38 remained constant except for the loss of one open (56) in 1915.

In the fall of 1903 the old company name was restored. We have spoken many pages back of the purchase of the original L.I. Electric Ry. by the New York & North Shore in 1899. In the Spring of 1902 the property and franchises of the New York & North Shore were sold at auction to the New York & Queens Co.Ry., which thereupon took over ownership and management of the Flushing-Jamaica line. The old L.I. Electric lines, which had not been included in the auction, were now all that remained of the New York & North Shore company. the owners felt that the name was now a misnomer, considering that the company operated nowhere near New York or the north shore, so on August 28, 1903, the old name of "Long Island Electric Railway" was restored.(1) The officers of the newly reconstituted L.I. Electric Ry. were as follows: Charles A. Porter of Philadelphia, William F. Hogan, vice-president and general manager, W.C. Martin, secretary and treasurer.

During 1904 and 1905 several new improvements were made. The turnout on New York Ave. at Baisley Blvd. was extended 537 feet to 120th Ave., giving ample room for as many as ten cars. Much of New York Ave. was filled in on either side of the track and graded in preparation for an eventual second track.(2) In 1905 the company reported that it had extended its City Line terminal about a block toward the "L" terminal. When the incline had been torn up in 1901 the company operated only as far as Drew St., leaving a gap of about three blocks to the "L" station. This was now shortened, to the joy of commuters who had pleaded for four years for the extension.

During the year 1904 rumors were rife of still another change in company administration and ownership. In this gossip the name of August Belmont, president of the Interborough Rapid Transit Co. figured most prominently. Two considerations probably induced Belmont to acquire the line -the opening of the new Metropolitan Race Track in South Jamaica (later called simply the Jamaica Race Track) in the summer of 1902 -and the construction of the vast new Belmont Park track during 1903 and 1904. These two race tracks gave promise of very heavy excursion business to the L.I. Electric trolleys. In addition, there was the lucrative summer traffic to Far Rockaway. In September of 1903, Belmont and the owners were reported to be \$200,000 apart in their estimates.(3) Matters were hastened somewhat by Belmont's acquisition of the powerful New York & Queens County Railway in December 1903, and the New York & Long Island Traction in June 1905.

Most of 1904 and 1905 passed in further secret negotiation until on Jan. 19, 1906 the purchase was officially announced.(4) Belmont had succeeded in acquiring the majority of the stock of both the Electric and Traction, and had entered into an agreement with the Long Island R.R. whereby each would hold a half ownership of the trolley companies. The Long Island R.R. had, since about 1898,

1. Report of the PSC for 1913, vol. V, pp. 601-603.
2. Report of the L.I. Electric to the R.R.Commission for 1904
3. Long Island Democrat Sept. 1, 1903 2:3
4. Report of the L.I. Electric to the PSC for 1907

1898, shown an interest in trolley companies that might act as feeders to its lines. The railroad had even built a few street rail-ways, such as the Ocean Electric, Northport Traction, Glen Cove R.R., and Nassau County Ry. (Sea Cliff). The Electric and especially the Traction were competitors of the Long Island for commuter business, and this may well have been the reason why the railroad joined with the IRT in buying both lines out. Instead of accepting the trolley companies in its own name, the Long Island R.R. gave the lines over to a holding company called the "Long Island Consolidated Electric Companies". The year 1905 marks the end, therefore, of the Long Island Electric's independence. For the next twenty years it was to function only as an IRT-LIRR subsidiary.



Top: Ten birney cars (nos. 401-410) bought from Eastern Mass. St. Ry. in 1926.

Bottom: No. 101, 15-bench double truck open bought from NY & Stamford in 1926 for heavy summer beach traffic to Far Rockaway (Both from William Slade)

THE INTERBOROUGH PERIOD

The absorption of the Long Island Electric, along with the New York & Queens and the New York & Long Island Traction, produced a profound change in the operation of all three trolley companies. Neither the IRT nor the LIRR had the interests of the trolleys at heart. The car lines were looked upon as minor holdings that existed merely to make money for the big parent corporations, and all the evils of absentee ownership crept in. The personal interest that the old owners had taken in the lines disappeared. The new officials were appointed functionaries of a huge, impersonal organization and the lines soon reflected the changed conditions. The roadbed was not maintained as before, the rolling stock was allowed to fall into disrepair, and the service steadily worsened. Financially, things declined as well. Up to 1906 the L.I. Electric had made a small profit yearly - \$20,847 in 1906. By 1909 this had declined to \$2187, and from 1910 on the road went into the red for each of the next twenty years until the company collapsed altogether in 1926.(1)

One of the first actions of the IRT in taking over the L.I. Electric in January 1906 was the retirement of the old power plant, in use since 1896. Three boilers, one superheater, two steam engines, and eight generators were dismantled and later sold for scrap in 1912.(2) All power was supplied henceforth by the LIRR. The sub-station at Cedar Manor was retained in service; this consisted of two 1000 KW rotary converters and two 1100 KW transformers. These converted LIRR power into voltages suitable for trolley use, but their efficiency declined over the years. Weak and fluctuating current was to dog the L.I. Electric lines for years.

In the summer of 1906 the IRT laid a short stretch of second track in New York Avenue from just south of the LIRR crossing to Linden Blvd. at the carbarn, and paved the street its full width at a cost of \$12,759. At the same time the line on Hempstead Tpk. was double-tracked between the LIRR grade crossing and Belmont Park - at a cost of \$9,502.(3)

The sale of the L.I. Electric Railway naturally produced a sweeping change in company officialdom. All the old officers left when the IRT assumed control, and new officials, all of them IRT men from the New York & Queens, took their places. Arthur Turnbull became president, F.I. Fuller vice president, Frank E. Haff secretary, and Jordan J. Rollins treasurer. Late in 1908 (Dec. 15th) the officials were changed for the last time. C.L. Addison became president and William O. Wood vice-president. No further changes were made for the rest of the Interborough period.

The union of nearly all the trolley lines of Queens and Nassau under one ownership, with the same set of officials managing each, permitted for the first time many improvements in operation and economies in maintenance. The most far-reaching improvement was the extension of New York & Long Island Traction operation all the way into Jamaica over the Long Island Electric tracks. On Sept. 1st, 1906 an agreement for this operation was concluded. The

1. Moody's Manuals for 1913-1924
2. Report of the L.I. Electric to the PSC for 1912
3. Report of the L.I. Electric to the PSC for 1906

Traction agreed to pay the Electric 3¢ for each cash passenger carried, and the agreement could be terminated by either party on 90 days' notice.(1) This agreement was renewed on March 1, 1911, and June 8, 1912. On this last date the Traction secured the additional privilege of standing its cars on the sidings of the Electric in 160th St.(2) This direct service was a great benefit for Nassau riders. Traction cars now ran from Hempstead and Mineola through to 160th St. Jamaica. This joint operation continued uninterrupted until 1926.

A second improvement was effected on Dec. 7th, 1906 through an agreement with the Nassau Electric R.R., owners of the Bergen St. line in Brooklyn, to construct a track connection between the end of the Long Island Electric tracks in Liberty Ave. at Drew St. with the Bergen St. line terminus just short of Grant Ave., a distance of two blocks. This permitted the Electric and Traction cars to run their passengers directly to the "L" station rather than two blocks short of it. For this privilege, each of the lines paid the Nassau Electric \$25 per month.(3) A small waiting room for passengers was fitted out in a rented building at the southwesterly corner of Liberty and Grant Aves. from this time onward.(4)

Considerable interchanging of rolling stock went on among the three IRT owned trolley companies between 1906 and 1926. One company often borrowed a few cars from the other at a nominal rental, or one or two work cars for a special job. The Traction, for instance, often loaned its express baggage car #17 to the Electric. Often the Electric and Traction both borrowed cars from the New York & Queens for months at a time, for the NY&Q had the biggest pool of trolleys. On special occasions, such as the Mineola Fair, held annually in the Fall, Long Island Electric opens ran all the way to Mineola. Traction cars, of course, regularly ran over Long Island Electric lines to Jamaica.

When it came to major repairs on rolling stock, both the Electric and the Traction ran their cars to the Woodside shops of the New York & Queens, the only place equipped to do heavy body and truck work. Light maintenance only was possible at Hempstead and Cedar Manor.

In 1907 the Long Island Electric installed a new siding at "Springfield" (probably Springfield Blvd. and Rockaway Road), and in 1910 lengthened the Hook Creek siding 120 feet.(5)

Neither the IRT or the LIRR had any intention of buying new trolleys to replace the oldest rolling stock, now getting on in years; yet the wear and tear of daily operation continued to exact its toll and make replacement more and more necessary. To avoid such a capital expenditure, the management in 1910 had recourse to a typical shoddy expedient; they bought 32 second-hand Westinghouse 49 motors of 35 HP for \$2400, to replace old, worn-out motors on the oldest Long Island Electric cars.(6) The records do not state whence these were obtained, but it so happened that the New York &

1. Report of the PSC for 1913, vol. V, p.602

2. ibid. pp. 601-603

3. Report of the PSC for 1913, vol. V, pp.601-603

4. Report of the Long Island Electric to the PSC for 1907

5. Report of the Long Island Electric to the PSC for 1907 and 1910

6. Report of the Long Island Electric to the PSC for 1910 and 1913

Queens retired that very year 35 of its last Steinway single-truckers. The probability is therefore very high that these ancient Steinway motors of 1896, already worn out, were installed for further duty on the Long Island Electric single truck opens. Little wonder that the railroad gradually ran down, burdened as it was with other people's cast-offs and an inadequate power supply.

The year 1912 imposed upon the company the necessity of a major track overhaul and paving job that cost \$28,854 to complete. The Hempstead Tpk. had been paved with brick since the turn of the century, but the city now set to work repaving the mile-long stretch with asphalt; 9590 feet of track had to be ripped out and a new set of tracks laid on each side of the road and paved with asphalt. The track ripped out on the north side of the road had been laid as recently as 1903, and the south side rail in 1906; both could have served for many years more, yet a large sum had to be wasted for a whim of the city.(1)

In 1913 the grade crossing on South St. with the Rockaway branch of the LIRR was eliminated. The railroad, during 1911 and 1912, moved and elevated its Jamaica station, and the removal of the South St. grade crossing was part of this program.

A second large track laying job was undertaken in 1914, this time voluntarily. The old single track in New York Ave. between South St. and Sayres Ave. was ripped out and replaced with double track at a cost of \$52,148. The new tracks were put into operation on Aug. 30, 1914.(2)

As this new track was going into operation, a major re-routing project at the city line was forced upon the company. The BRT was at that time extending the Liberty Ave. elevated from the old Grant Ave. terminus to Lefferts Ave. Putting up the steel bents and regrading the avenue forced the shutting down of the eastbound Long Island Electric track early in 1914, and trolley operation became increasingly difficult. The company unexpectedly hit upon a simple solution to the whole problem.

The New York & Long Island Traction line on Rockaway Blvd. crossed Liberty Ave. and then ran west on 101st Ave. to the "L" terminus. Why not simply put in a connecting curve to the Traction rails on Rockaway Blvd. at Liberty Ave., and use their line to the "L"? The switch was quickly installed and on August 26, 1914 Long Island Electric operation began over the new route. The old route on Liberty Avenue west of Rockaway Blvd. was permanently abandoned. The company tore out the 2.07 miles of track at a cost of \$27,549 and sold it for scrap. It was a wise move. The grading on Liberty Ave. was being so drastically changed by the city that it would have cost the company a fortune to relay all new rail there. In some places the old and new grades differed by as much as six feet! Operating over the Traction rails was a cheap and sensible solution that cost the company only 10¢ per car mile.(3)

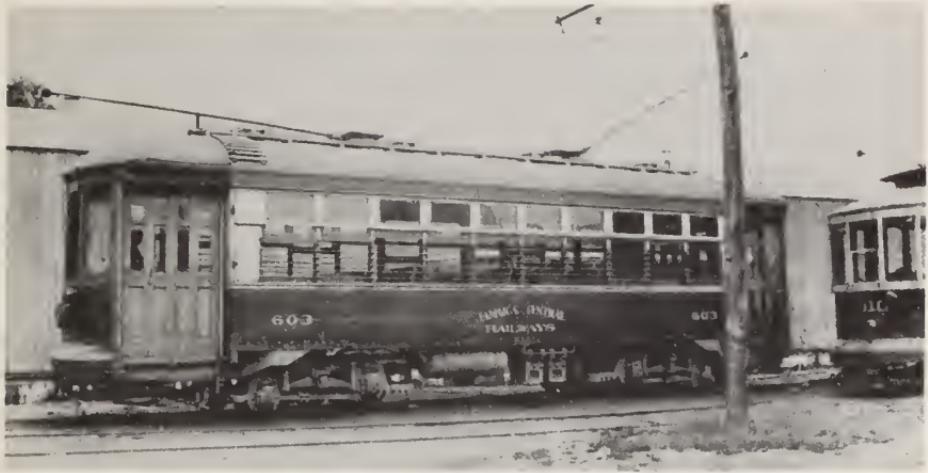
We are unusually fortunate in having an account of the Long Island Electric Railway as it was during the early Interborough

1. Report of the L.I. Electric to the PSC for 1912 and 1913
2. Report of the L.I. Electric to the PSC for 1915
3. Report of the L.I. Electric to the PSC for 1915

period as seen through the eyes of one of the old motormen, Charles Flemming, who gave his reminiscences to a "Long Island Star" reporter in 1937.(1)

According to Mr. Flemming the railroad operated three rather unusual pieces of rolling stock. One was known as the President's car, a little four-wheeled "dinky" equipped with plush seats, mirrors and stained glass windows. William F. Hogan, the road's manager during this period, used it to tour the line on inspection trips. Another more unusual item was the American Express car used to carry freight from Brooklyn to Far Rockaway using the Jamaica Ave. tracks to Jamaica and then switching to the Far Rockaway tracks at 160th St. Most curious of all was the funeral car which was rented to undertakers for transporting a casket through sections that were otherwise impassable. Mr. Flemming recalled one amusing experience he had with this car in 1911. During the winter of that year the company received a hurry call for the funeral car from an undertaking firm in Belmont Park. With five other men they started out from the Cedar Manor car barns in a gathering snow storm. They got to Belmont Park successfully, but because of the storm the undertakers were delayed and the car had to wait for several hours. By the time all was ready for the return trip, the snow had covered the landscape. When the open trolley reached the bottom of the hill at 208th St. where the Bellaire Theatre is now located, it stalled in a drift and the men had to set to work shoveling. The howling wind defeated all their efforts, blowing everything back again, so the crew climbed back into the trolley and sat on top of the casket where they proceeded to harmonize "In The Good Old Summertime" until the storm subsided and assistance arrived.

Mr. Flemming has also left us a picture of the Far Rockaway line as it was during the years 1906-1916. At that time there were less than two dozen houses between Cedar Manor and Springfield Dock. New York Blvd. passed through woods and open fields and ended in the swamps at Rockaway Blvd. There were no street lights and the motorman had to drive at night by instinct or memory. The road was unpaved and no wheeled vehicle could get through very far without miring. To designate stopping points the trolley line was divided into "corners", usually named after the nearest cultivated field or farmhouse. Thus, instead of streets one stopped at "Skelly's Corner" or "Fuhrman's Corner". The stretch of track along Rockaway Blvd. was abominable. There was only one track and a rutted road beside it which was hardly a foot above the swamps on either side. In summer it wasn't too bad, but in winter the high tides flooded the roadway and drowned the rails, forcing the company into the unique position of operating by tide table as well as time table. Even with this precaution cars became marooned on occasion, and the passengers had to wait until the tide subsided to continue. Mr. Flemming said that when a high tide was due the motorman made every effort to reach Hook Creek Bridge, which was above the high water mark. Here the trolley was left standing while motorman and passengers adjourned to Schaller's Restaurant for refreshments. While the company waited for the tide to go out each passenger did what he could to entertain the company with music and song. The nights along here were a real test of a motorman's nerves. When the motormen met each other at a siding each informed the other of what he might expect to encounter such as farm wagons, horse and buggies, stray



Top: Typical rush hour scene in 160th St., Jamaica in 1930's. No. 603 loading for Ozone Park, No. 316 behind it (Frank Goldsmith)

Bottom: No. 603 in Cedar Manor barn in 1932. These St. Louis cars (built 1915) were best on system (G. Votava)

animals, etc. Travelers waiting in the darkness for the car were naturally invisible to the motorman, and to get the trolley to stop they had to signal with a lantern or strike a match to be noticed. On one occasion the Rockaway Blvd. tracks sank into the muck and passengers had to walk about a half mile along a narrow board walk to reach a car on dry land. This lasted until the roadbed was raised by pumping sand from the swamps on either side.

Anecdotes like these reflect the real romance of railroading in a day when life was slow-paced and the trolley the only form of transit there was. A ride along the same stretch today gives no hint of the primitive conditions of 40 years ago. The advent of the automobile caused some improvement of Rockaway Blvd. because it was the most direct route to the Rockaways. In May, 1914 the city took the first step toward acquiring title to the dirt track that passed for Rockaway Blvd. In April, 1916, the old roadway was at last graded and paved and the city planned an eventual widening to 100 feet.(1) This was not done until about 1945. All during the trolley period the road remained narrow, only 24 feet wide, with the trolley track running alongside in the sand shoulder on the north side of the road.

The impact of the first World War on the Long Island Electric was hardly noticeable. There were no factories, war plants or encampments anywhere on the line, so that the passengers remained the same in numbers. During the year 1917 the company put in automatic block signals on the Rockaway line and began replacing some of the old wooden poles in Jamaica with iron ones.(2) The years 1918 and 1919 were bad ones for the company. The cost of labor and materials sky-rocketed as a result of the war, and the company, which was already losing money steadily as it was, felt the pinch. Maintenance got poorer and schedules worse, so that passengers made complaints in ever-increasing numbers to the Public Service Commission.

At a hearing at the Commission's chambers in August 1919, vice-president and general manager W.O. Wood suggested selling the whole line to the city at a price to be fixed by an appraisal to be made under conditions satisfactory to the directors and the bondholders. The old 5¢ and 10¢ fare was no longer adequate these days to meet expenses. It was pointed out that the nine mile ride to Far Rockaway for a 10¢ fare was ruinously low and was driving the company into bankruptcy. Not only was income lower than ever, but the company had been forced only two days before (August 13th) to grant a wage increase to conductors and motormen, adding \$30,000 to the annual payroll.(3)

This created a crisis and the company appealed to the PSC for permission to raise the fares. The city authorities bitterly fought every effort of the Long Island trolley companies to gain even a one cent increase. The commission vacillated, as usual, caught between the two fires of political pressure and the trolley company's dire need.

The company pointed out that its financial plight was desperate. There were \$600,000 in outstanding bonds on which no dividends or interest had been paid since 1910. Not only did the

1. Queensborough Magazine for May 1914, p.24 and April 1916

2. Report of the L.I. Electric to the PSC for 1917 and 1918

3. New York Times, August 15, 1919 3:8

investors receive no earnings, but they had to contribute \$130,000 more just to keep the line running. The interest arrears alone had mounted to \$300,000 and the city, on top of all this, had just issued orders to pave the spaces between the tracks, an expense that would crush the company completely.

The Public Service Commission, seeing that a fare rise was imperative, granted permission on Dec. 15th, 1919. The fare from the Brooklyn line to Belmont Park was increased from 5¢ to 10¢, and the Far Rockaway line was divided into three 5¢ fare zones; passengers henceforth paid a nickel on boarding the car, a second nickel at the Nassau Co. line, and a third on reentering Queens County at Lawrence.(1)

Even this increased revenue was insufficient to meet the operating deficits of 1920 and 1921, so a general reduction in wage scales for motormen and conductors was ordered in 1922 as follows:(2)

SERVICE	NEW RATE	OLD RATE
Men in 1st 6 months	41¢ per hr.	50¢ per hr.
" " 2nd 6 months	45¢	50¢
2nd year	47¢	52¢
3rd year	49¢	54¢
4th year	50¢	55¢
5-9th year	51¢	56¢
10th & thereafter	53¢	59¢

To save even more money the Long Island Electric on Sept. 24th 1921 abandoned operation over the tracks of the Traction in Rockaway Blvd and 101st Ave. to the "L" terminal at Grant Ave. Henceforth all cars turned back at Rockaway Blvd. and passengers received a free transfer to a Traction car for City Line.(3)

About 1922, Nassau County decided to do something about the deplorable condition of the Rockaway Road between Hook Creek and Cedarhurst. The road had, as usual, slowly settled into the mud over the years, and the county, before attempting any paving, set to work pumping tons of sand onto the road to raise the grade. This forced the Long Island Electric to suspend service on the quarter mile of highway affected. Cars from Jamaica ended their runs at Hook Creek siding; then passengers walked over the bridge and along a temporary wooden planking down to the higher land near Cedarhurst. Here one of two shuttle cars was waiting to finish the journey to Far Rockaway. This make-shift arrangement was hard on everybody. The passengers grumbled loudly, and the company found it impossible to service the poor, isolated shuttle cars. They rapidly became dirty and the machinery deteriorated in the moist swamp air. The power was weak at this remote end of the line, and the cars just barely ambled into Far Rockaway under two points of power. After several months of this the track connection was finally restored.

By this time -1922- almost half the rolling stock of the company was a quarter century old and in very poor condition. Again,

1. N.Y. Times, Dec. 12, 1919 18:3 -Report of the L.I. Electric to the
 2. Report of the L.I. Electric to the PSC for 1922. (PSC for 1920
 3. ibid. P. 4

instead of securing new trolleys, the management took the easy way out by renting four old Brooklyn Rapid Transit trolleys; eight window double-truck closed cars, themselves dating back to 1896 and 1897. Later in the year 19 other cars were rented from the Bridge Operating Co., closed, deck roof, Jewett trolleys dating from 1904.(1) When the chocolate brown Bridge cars first arrived they were still serviceable and very well maintained, but in Long Island Electric hands they degenerated very rapidly. The "new" cars enabled the company to operate on a ten minute headway on New York Ave. to Far Rockaway, an improvement long demanded by the South Side Civic Association.(2)

In the Spring of 1923 the Long Island Railroad undertook additional grade crossing eliminations on the main line between Bellmore and Hollis. The work proceeded without interrupting the trolley schedule on the Hempstead Tpk. The derails and flagman at the crossings could now be removed with a consequent saving of time and money.

On January 24th, 1923, William O. Wood, the old IRT-appointed vice-president and general manager of the Long Island Electric and Traction lines, resigned, terminating a long period of indifferent management and inertia. Col. Grayson M. Murphy, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the IRT, offered the post to General Lincoln C. Andrews, executive officer of the Public Service Commission, and on Feb. 1st, 1923 the offer was accepted.(3) On Feb. 15th he formally assumed control of the two trolley lines. To handle legal matters, General Andrews appointed H. Pushae Williams, formerly president of the Queensborough Chamber of Commerce as his company counsel, an appointment that was destined to have an important bearing on the life of the trolley line three years later.

One of General Andrews' first acts was to scrap 18 venerable, worn-out open cars dating back to 1896. At the same time the color scheme of the cars was changed to orange-yellow, in an effort to make the trolleys seem brighter and more attractive to the public.

The appointment of General Andrews was the first step on the part of the IRT to divest itself of all its surface railway holdings - in other words, the three Queens trolley companies. The powerful IRT, falling ever deeper into debt because of the 5¢ fare, was determined to sacrifice all its lesser properties to save at least the Manhattan subway and elevated lines from the general collapse. Once the IRT would refuse to pay the debts of the trolley companies, there would be nothing left but receivership.

As if things were not bad enough, a further disaster struck the company on July 6th, 1924. The Cedar Manor car barn was gutted by fire and reduced to a mass of charred, twisted steel. The destruction was so complete that only \$40 was realized from a sale of the scrap iron remaining, and \$319 for the brick walls. Ten revenue cars and four work cars were trapped inside the building and burnt; most of them the leased Bridge Operating cars.(4)

1. Report of the Long Island Electric to the PSC for 1922
2. New York Times, June 2, 1922 8:3
3. ibid. Jan. 25, 1923 32:2 and Feb. 2, 1923 24:2
4. Report of the PSC for 1925, p.509

The company now found itself in the impossible position of having no money and no cars, enough to drive any street railway management into black despair. There were only two alternatives; shut down and abandon the line altogether, or quickly secure new cars. General Andrews hopefully chose the latter course, and bought 25 old closed cars second-hand from the Second Avenue Railroad Co. for \$63,456.70.(1) These cars had been built new for the Metropolitan Street Railway Co. by Brill about 1898 and had seen 10 years' service before being transferred to the Second Avenue Co. in 1908. After an additional 16 years of service on Second Ave. there was little life left in the cars. The frames sagged badly, the woodwork was dry-rotted, and the motors were worn. Yet in comparison to the other Long Island Electric cars they seemed no worse. In fact, after a new coat of orange paint had been applied, the cars were sufficiently presentable to move the Long Island Daily Press to make this comment:

"The management of the New York & Long Island Traction and the Long Island Electric Ry. has made good in its promise to install new cars and give more frequent service. The sight of the new cars is cheering to residents in the communities served by these lines. They have become so used to the spectacle of antediluvian vehicles operated as trolley cars, which looked as if about to tumble to pieces, that they can scarcely believe their eyes when they see new and up-to-date cars actually in service."(2)

The purchase of this new rolling stock, in addition to the annual loss from operation year after year, seems to have been the straw that broke the camel's back as far as the bondholders were concerned. Not a cent of interest had been paid since 1910, and the Chase National Bank as Trustee for the bondholders, finally brought foreclosure proceedings on October 31, 1924. The court promptly appointed General Andrews receiver, effective November 1. Since Andrews was already receiver for the New York & Queens and the N.Y. & L.I. Traction, and since the L.I. Electric was in effect the western continuation of the Traction company's Nassau routes, it seemed advantageous to the Queens Supreme Court to unite the three companies under one management. In a statement to the press, General Andrews announced his intention of running the three trolley companies as one system to better the service, and stated that much thought was being given to new track layouts and connections.(3) He envisioned merging the two lines into one company and investing much new capital.(4)

The first concrete result of this planning was the extension of the Southern Division Traction service from Freeport into Jamaica beginning Nov. 15th, 1924. Since Aug. 17th, 1924, no Traction cars on the Southern Division had been running into Queens County because of financial difficulties and a fire on the Springfield bridge over the LIRR. General Andrews, as receiver for both lines, arranged for Traction cars to resume operation west of Rosedale, and then north up New York Ave. to Jamaica Ave. and 160th St. This direct new service to the South Side proved popular and was well-patronized.(5)

1. Report of the Long Island Electric to the PSC for 1926
2. Long Island Daily Press, Nov. 12, 1924 6:2
3. *ibid.* November 3, 1924 1:5
4. New York Times, November 2, 1924 25:2
5. New York Times, November 16, 1924 II, 2:3

Unfortunately for the receivership and for the trolley lines in general, Lincoln C. Andrews was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in March, 1925, in charge of enforcement of the prohibition laws. His new assignment involved so many responsibilities that he had little time left for Queens transit problems.(1)

On April 23rd the court decided favorably on a request permitting General Andrews to operate the Traction or Electric cars as one line, the cars of one operating freely over the tracks of the other without restriction. The plan to integrate the two lines thus moved one step nearer.(2)

Mere re-routing, however, were not enough to rescue the Long Island Electric from the low state into which it had fallen. The rails were in very bad condition, corrugated in some places and badly broken in others. Derailments were very frequent and service undependable. Poor pay and poor working conditions lowered the employees' morale and the labor turnover was very high. The wits of Jamaica coined the name "Banana Line" for the route because, as they put it, the cars were yellow and came in bunches when they came at all. The local Jamaica paper, the Long Island Daily Press, seized on this jibe and did all it could to give the company a bad press by frequent derisive references to the Banana Line's shortcomings. It was plain that this state of things could not go on indefinitely.

In the Spring of 1925 the bondholders finally gave up all hope of making the line solvent, and instructed the Trustee, the Chase National Bank, to order all the properties and franchises of the Long Island Electric sold at auction to satisfy a judgment for \$400,000 in unpaid interest and charges. State Senator John Karle was appointed Referee in Bankruptcy.(3)

The sale was fixed for noon of July 14th at the Court House in Long Island City.(4) When the time came for the sale, however, the bondholders, through their attorney, Edward J. Connolly, postponed the sale indefinitely, giving as their ostensible reason their belief that this was not a good time to dispose of the property.(5) Some days later it turned out that the postponement had been decided upon because the receiver some days before had petitioned the Transit Commission to abandon a part of the Liberty Avenue line between 100th St. and Rockaway Blvd. Until the Commission issued its decision, the status of the railway would remain in doubt, and it could not therefore be sold.(6)

On July 20th, 1925 the Transit Commission held a public hearing on the abandonment of the western end of the Liberty Avenue line. It was pointed out that the company had not bothered to operate the stretch because of falling-off of business and because the "L" overhead took away all the old traffic. There was another consideration besides: it cost the Long Island Electric \$500 monthly for maintaining the Ozone Park railroad crossing, a sum that the trolley company could no longer afford, and for which passenger revenues were no longer adequate.(7) The commission agreed to the

1. N.Y. Times, Apr. 1st, 1925 6:5:

2. ibid. April 24, 1925 7:3

3. L.I. Daily Press June 17, 1925 1:4

4. L.I. Daily Press June 22, 1925 2:1

5. ibid. July 14, 1925 1:2

6. ibid. July 18, 1925

7. ibid. July 20, 1925 1:7

abandonment, and the bankruptcy sale was once again scheduled for the 26th of February 1926.

This time nothing intervened to stop the sale, and the wretched Long Island Electric was put up at auction at Long Island City Court House. Hardly anyone displayed any interest in the sale. The whole line, franchises and equipment, was knocked down to the American Communities Corp. for \$115,000.(1) No one had ever heard of the company that bought the line, and the new owners maintained silence not only as to their own identity, but what was more alarming, as to their intentions toward continued trolley operation as well.

Even those who had long criticized the trolley service were now in a state of anxiety at the prospect of complete cessation of car service. The trolley had been running faithfully for as long as anyone could remember, and it seemed unthinkable now that it should not go right on operating indefinitely. The Electric and Traction service was the cheapest method of travel over fairly long distances in Queens and Nassau, and in fact the principal means of surface transportation available. When rumors of trolley abandonment got around to Jamaica's business men, there was consternation. Most of Jamaica's retail trade came from the outlying suburbs, and the trolley abandonment would cut deeply into store revenues. A similar bankruptcy sale had been held for the New York & Long Island Traction, so that the entire Nassau trolley network as well as the Queens routes also hung in the balance.

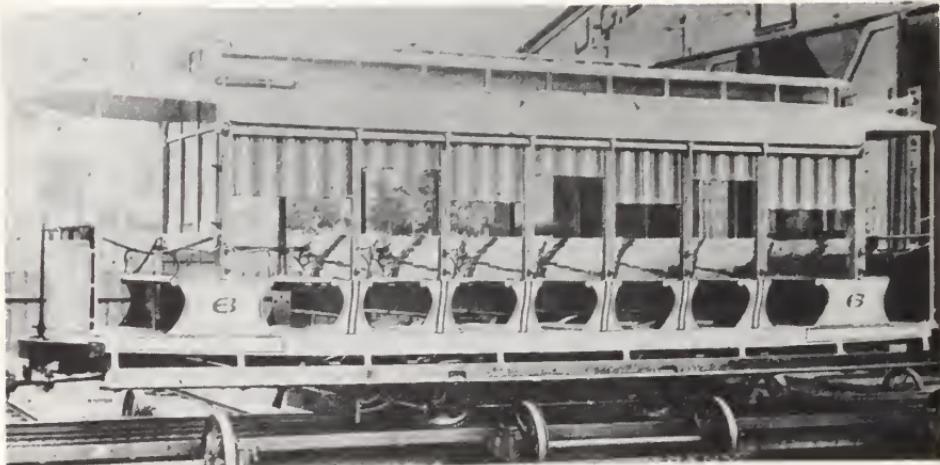
The air was finally cleared early in March with the announcement that the Bank of Manhattan was behind the purchase of the bankrupt Long Island Electric, and that the "American Communities Corp." was in reality two agents of the bank, Park A. Rowley, vice-president of the Bank of Manhattan, and H. Pushae Williams, formerly General Andrews' counsel and now president of the First Mortgage Guaranty Co. The Bank of Manhattan made no effort to buy up the Nassau network of the New York & Long Island Traction. In answer to many inquiries it announced that it would take over the Long Island Electric properties only and invest all the capital required to rehabilitate completely the run-down system.

General Andrews and his General manager, Edward A. Roberts, entertained a brief hope of buying up the Traction routes for the New York & Queens, even founding a bus company, the Queens-Nassau Transit Lines, for that purpose, but franchise difficulties developed, and the Traction finally was left to perish a few weeks later on April 4, 1926.

H. Pushae Williams, as president of the American Communities Corp., applied to Albany for a charter and for permission to change the trolley company's name to the "Jamaica Central Railways". The permit arrived on March 25, 1926, and on April 4th the old Long Island Electric as such went out of existence, the very same day that witnessed the death of the New York & Long Island Traction.(2) The busy Washington St. (160th St.) terminal that for years had witnessed the arrival and departure of cars for Mineola, Hempstead and Freeport, now shrank to its original pre-1906 proportions, service to Belmont Park, Far Rockaway and Ozone Park only. On the

1. N.Y. Times, Feb. 27, 1926 24:2 -also L.I. Daily Press Feb. 27, 1926 1:5
2. N.Y. Times, Jan. 9, 1926 30:4
L.I. Daily Press, March 24, 1926 -and March 25, 1926 1:6

morning of April 5th, 1926, the Jamaica Central Railways formally took over the properties.



Top: No. 51 (Brill 1896) one of five single truck closed cars in original paint scheme of white with gold trim. All were retired in 1923.
 Bottom: No. 6 (Brill 1896) one of nine single truck 10-bench open cars, numbers changed to 66-75 upon arrival on property. All were scrapped in 1922.

THE JAMAICA CENTRAL RAILWAYS

Looking back on these days, it certainly seems remarkable that the Bank of Manhattan undertook at all to revitalize the old trolley line. At a time when small trolley systems all over the nation were disappearing one by one in ever-increasing numbers, the spectacle of the Long Island Electric Railway being re-named, rebuilt and largely restocked was something of a phenomenon. Only their unbounded faith in the development possibilities of central Queens could have inspired the directors to undertake such a huge task.

And a huge task it was. Consider what the Bank got for its money: A 17 mile right-of-way on which the rail was largely broken and corrugated, demanding almost complete replacement; a fleet of old trolleys, the very youngest of which was 21 years old, and which many acid-tongued patrons claimed were held together largely with hair pins and chewing gum; no car barn at all other than the fire-blackened foundations; an inadequate power supply; and an underpaid and unreliable group of employees who had little reason to stay, and rarely did.

It is to the great credit of the Jamaica Central Railways that it met this discouraging situation with determination and careful planning. President Williams was aware of his own limitations in the field of electric traction, and therefore secured as general manager of the new line a man more experienced in railways named Van Nostrand. This official proved unsatisfactory, and was speedily replaced by a man with fifteen years' experience on the New York & Queens as superintendent of maintenance of way and structures- William E. Ross. With the huge reserves of the bank behind him, Mr. Ross threw himself into the challenging task with a competence and energy that soon changed the face of the old trolley road.

It will be remembered that the Jamaica Central took over in April; to meet the coming heavy summer traffic and to take advantage of the good summer weather, Mr. Ross turned his attention first to track rehabilitation. The old rails had caused the cars to derail no less than half a dozen times a day during the years 1922-1926. Proper scheduling was impossible and the car crews made little effort to maintain the proper headway, knowing the peculiar weaknesses of rails and wheels better than the company. The new management laid one mile of new track on the Far Rockaway line, and the rail on the rest of the system was resurfaced and ground smooth, pending outright replacement. New plates were placed at joints, the old ones tightened, and much bonding replaced.

¹The company at the same time decided to take over the former New York & Long Island Traction Company's Belmont Park siding before the Salzberg wrecking crews removed it. Traffic on racing days was heavy and space was needed to accumulate enough cars to handle the crowds; 1975 feet, or .75 miles of double track, all in Nassau County, was thus retained.(1)

1. Report of the PSC for 1926, pp. 425-27

A second huge project was the erection of a new 16 car corrugated iron car barn at Cedar Manor. The old trolley maintenance equipment, partly broken and partly obsolete, was sold, and much servicing machinery bought new for future repairs.

Most urgent of all was the refurbishing of the trolley cars themselves. The old Long Island Electric cars had almost all been scrapped in 1923 and 1924. The few remaining trolleys dating back to 1905 and before were too far gone to repair, so Mr. Ross turned his attention to the twenty-five second-hand cars that had been bought in 1924. Twenty-two of these twenty-five were promptly rebuilt to remove rotten parts, body sag, worn brakes, loose wood-work, etc., and were put back into service as fast as possible as the "300" series.

To accommodate the Far Rockaway beach traffic for the summer Mr. Ross purchased six large 15-bench open cars from the New York & Stamford line. These had been built in 1911 and had served on the shore lines in Connecticut especially for the Rye Beach traffic. With a capacity of 75 each, these cars were well adapted for the Rockaway line. Besides these, ten Birney one-man safety cars were purchased from the Eastern Massachusetts Street Railway. These were fairly new cars (1920) and were part of the great fleet of 200 owned by Eastern Mass. and numbered in the 5000's. The ten cars were placed in service on July 19, 1926; the Jamaica Central repainted and renumbered them #401-410 and used them on Jamaica and Liberty Aves during the non-rush hours and on Sundays when traffic was light. The cars were in good condition and were well maintained. They cost the company \$3970 each, a rather high figure for second-hand equipment. In the same month that the Birneys were purchased, the Jamaica Central bought from H.E. Salzberg one former New York & Long Island Traction car, the body of #15. Salzberg sold the motors for scrap, and the Jamaica Central got the car therefore rather cheaply- \$25- using it on rare occasions as a trailer in Stansbury's Lake, an operation to be described later.

This increase in equipment permitted the Jamaica Central to retire four decrepit closed cars remaining from Long Island Electric days: #105, 107, and 114. (1)

To blot out from the memory of the riding public the unsavory reputation of the former "Banana Line", the company adopted a bright and cheerful new color scheme, the red and cream of the Third Avenue system. To keep the rolling stock bright and clean looking, a new inspection and cleaning policy was adopted. Every car was run into the shed at least once a week for overhauling, every time that it had traveled 1000 miles. In addition, each car got a daily cleaning and a weekly bath.

A notable reform was made in operating personnel and labor relations. In the old Long Island Electric days the labor turnover had been high because of low salaries. Men came and went and took no pride in their work. The trolleys were injured more often than not, and there was no incentive to safe operation. The Jamaica

Central changed all this. At no cost to its employees the company provided each man with a \$1000 life insurance policy. To encourage safe operation the company offered an annual prize of \$500 to the employee achieving the best safety record, and a bonus was paid monthly to all motormen who had no accidents on their runs. These inducements tended to build up a loyal and careful group of employees.

During this first season of operation -1926- the men at the helm of the Jamaica Central were as follows: H. Pushae Williams president; Robert M. Catherine, vice-president; Park A. Rowley, treasurer; H.L. Dayton, secretary; and William E. Ross, general manager. Thanks to the efforts of these men, traffic on the company's lines increased one million over 1925.(1)

To finance the extensive rehabilitation undertaken during the year, the Transit Commission authorized the company to issue 2000 shares of no par value stock, which was sold for \$20,000. The company issued a bond for \$140,000 payable April 5th, 1931 at 6% and secured by a mortgage on the railroad property. With the money raised, \$115,000 was used for acquiring new cars and servicing machinery, \$7500 was spent for the six open bench cars, and \$17,500 was retained for working capital.(2)

The year 1927 brought further extensive improvements in the Jamaica Central operation. In February 1927 the company bought six more closed trolleys second-hand from the Third Avenue Rail-way system for \$990 each and placed them in service as cars #501-506. These cars were almost identical to the 300's already in service except that the fronts were slightly different.

On March 1st another great improvement was made. This was the installation of a new crossing curve from Jamaica Ave. into 160th St. for the westbound cars. For 30 years cars coming from Queens had been obliged to cross over from the westbound track in Jamaica Ave. to the eastbound, and then run a short distance against traffic before turning into 160th St. By the twenties this outmoded arrangement was seriously snarling automobile traffic, slowing schedules and causing much adverse criticism of the trolleys. The Jamaica Central easily removed the bottleneck by installing a new curve and overhead which was controlled by an automatic electric device, the whole improvement costing \$5000.(3)

Big as was this improvement, the company outdid itself with the building of a new \$25,000 sub-station at the corner of New York Ave. and 114th Ave., adjoining the car barns. The old sub-station had been operating since 1906 without replacement or enlargement, and was now totally inadequate for supplying current to over 50 trolleys. Even in Long Island Electric days the voltage had been very low beyond Queens and in the Rockaways, due to poor bonding, and at that time the company operated mostly small single truck cars on a wide headway. In 1927 the cars were all double truck and the headway was so close that operation with the old power supply was out of the question. The new station, using power from the Long Island R.R., permitted, for the first time in

1. Queensborough Magazine for April, 1927, vol.8, p.222
2. Report of the Jamaica Central Rys. to the PSC for 1926.
3. Queensborough Magazine for Feb., 1927, vol.8, p.155

forty years, fast operation of many cars at once.

Another big project was the relaying of the westbound track on Jamaica Avenue between 168th St. and 176th St. during the Spring and Summer months. This stretch had become badly corrugated and needed replacement. In the Fall of the year the company made its final purchase of cars; six steel arch roof PAYE St. Louis trolleys from the Empire State R.R. of Oswego, N.Y., at a cost of \$2830 apiece. These were numbered #601-606 and raised the company's total rolling stock to 55.

The bonus system to employees for safe operation was working so well that the company saw fit to extend it this year. Besides the monthly bonus of \$5, an additional \$10 bonus was given for every three months of safe operation, and for a year of full-time service without accidents another \$100 besides, so that a careful motorman could count on \$200 a year over and above his annual wages.(1)

During the Spring and Summer of 1928 the Jamaica Central completed two other large track relaying jobs; the whole of South St. from New York Blvd. to Waltham St., and the eastbound track on Jamaica Ave. from 168th St. to 176th St. South St. had been widened and repaved only recently, and the new rails were relocated to the center of the new street. While this was going on, more machinery was added at the car barn, and a new servicing pit was provided.(2)

Financially, the company had been doing so well that the \$140,000 in bonds issued in 1926 was called in, and there was issued instead \$105,000 in first mortgage bond certificates of \$30,000 each.(3)

During the year 1929 most of the company's efforts were taken up with overcoming threatened traffic stoppages due to extensive sewer laying, street paving, and street widening projects. Queens was bursting at the seams on all sides, and the vigorous growth and expansion of the county was at once a curse and a blessing. The fare registers sang a livelier and louder tune than ever before in the company's history. In 1929 passenger fares reached a peak of 13,585,786, double the number of 1925. More money than ever was coming into the company's coffers, but the changes required by this vast expansion demanded that much of the cash be ploughed back again into the physical plant. Keeping a regular schedule in the face of torn-up streets and undermined tracks was a difficult and trying experience for the trolley company. The vast increase in the use of automobiles in Jamaica further complicated the schedule. Traffic congestion and heavy parking along Jamaica Ave. between 160th and 168th Streets were frequent and made a regular headway almost impossible, even with the best of intentions.

The main reason above all others for the surprising success of the Jamaica Central was the unprecedented boom in housing all through Hillside, Hollis, Bellaire, Queens Village, and to a lesser extent in Ozone Park and South Jamaica during the late 20's. Large tracts of farmland were sold and broken up into small lots for homes, and thousands of new residents flocked to Queens to buy these new houses. The great influx of population brought new and steady customers for the trolley line, and for the first time there grew up a profitable

1. Queensborough Magazine, Jan. 1928, vol.9, p.150

2. Queensborough Magazine, Feb. 1929, vol.10, p.196

3. Report of the Jamaica Central Railways to the PSC for 1929

short-haul business that enabled the company to make a respectable profit. Passenger fares in five years had exactly doubled, reaching nearly 14 million by 1931. The housing boom was moving on eastward, and there was every reason to believe that the expansion of population would go on indefinitely. The collapse of the stock market and the ensuing depression had little effect on the Jamaica Central. No matter how slender a man's means might become, transit was one of those few indispensables on which he could not afford to economize.

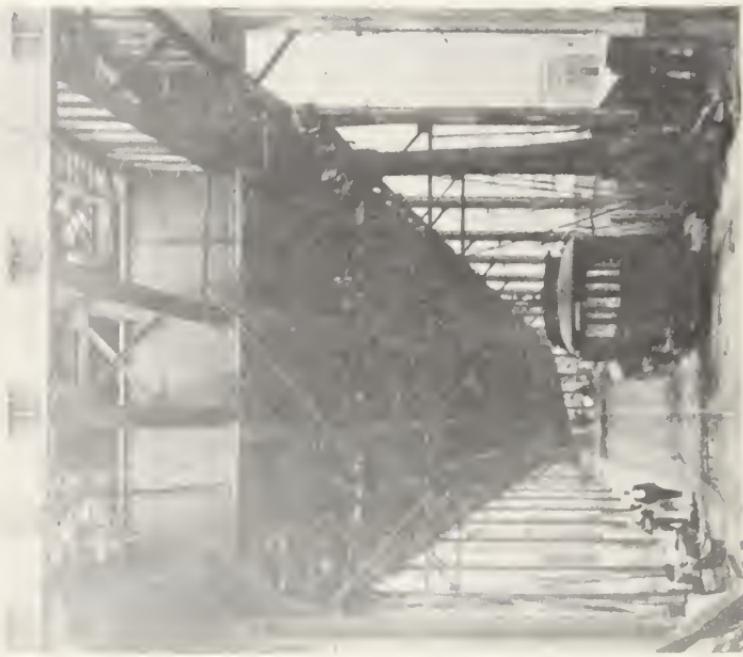
In 1930 and 1931 the Long Island Railroad began a major track relocation project in the heart of Jamaica. From Jamaica Station to Hillside Station the tracks at that time lay in a shallow open cut, and each of the cross streets was carried across the tracks on a narrow iron bridge. At some points the streets crossed at grade. For several miles east and west of Jamaica the tracks were elevated and the railroad decided that the easiest way to eliminate the constant complaints of traffic jams and delays was to elevate the tracks all through Jamaica village as well.

In 1930 the work began, and of course the trolley operation on 160th St. was immediately affected. The old iron bridge carrying the single track across the railroad was torn down, and the through Ozone Park-Belmont Park service was thus cut off. Running on schedule during 1930 became almost impossible. Ozone Park and Rockaway trolleys had to run in together on the single track up to St. Monica's Church and stop; passengers crossed on a narrow temporary footbridge from Jamaica Ave. to get the cars. Belmont Park cars could still run into 160th St., but were cut off from the car barn.

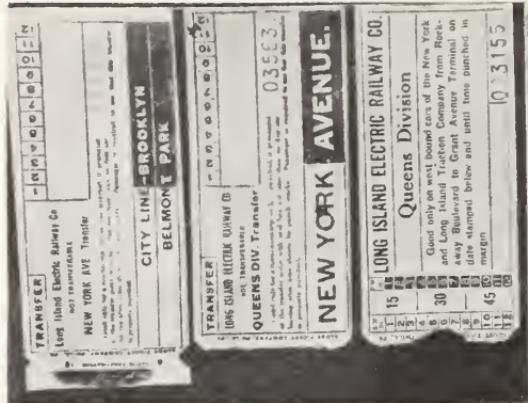
To service the now isolated Jamaica Ave. cars, an ingenious dead-heading scheme was operated from Feb. 15th to June 30th. Cars ran along Jamaica Ave. all the way down to 139th St., where they met the Manhattan & Queens tracks coming in from the south. The cars then changed ends and backed into 139th St., ran on Archer Ave. and along Sutphin Blvd. to South St. Here the M&Q tracks crossed the Jamaica Central, and the company installed two switches, one in the northeast quadrant and one in the southwest quadrant to permit cars to back into South St., and then go on to the Cedar Manor barn. For this privilege of using their tracks the Jamaica Central paid the Manhattan & Queens \$5 a day. Very late in 1930 the track connection on 160th St. was restored, and in 1932 the bridge structure carrying the railroad tracks overhead was completed.(1)

No account of the trolley operation on Jamaica Ave. would be complete without a mention of the famous "Stansbury's Lake" at 184th St. Queens in the 20's had no sewerage system, and during periods of heavy rainfall the accumulated water of at least five blocks would cascade down the hill from as far up as Hillside Ave. and collect in the hollow at 184th Place and 185th St., Hollis, opposite Stansbury's Lumber Yard, and the Langer Printing Works. In earlier years the farm land on either side easily absorbed this overflow, but when pavements and sidewalks cut off this natural drain the water was prevented from running off, and swelled into a lake of formidable size and depth. The waters extended from 186th St. almost to 184th St., reaching a depth of three feet and more in places. When this happened, all traffic on Jamaica Ave. ceased.

1. Report of the Jamaica Central Rys. to the PSC for 1930 - also personal reminiscences of Mr. William J. Rugen.



Terminus at City Line (Drew St.) in 1914
Ten-bench open just arrived from Jamaica
(B. Presbrey)



Some transfers used by L.I. Electric and Jamaica Central thru the years
(W. Nason Cooper)



Ten-bench open just arrived from Jamaica
(R. Presbrey)

Foolhardy motorists were frequently marooned, and small boys in bathing suits made fortunes rescuing motorists and bailing out flooded cellars. All trolley traffic stopped, of course. Just at the edge of the lake at 184th St., a crossover permitted cars to return to Jamaica. On the other shore no such facility was available. People had to walk a block north to 90th Ave. and four blocks east to continue their journey. Fortunately no automobile traffic could move either, so that the trolleys did not suffer by comparison. General Andrews, back in 1925, had attempted to overcome this obstacle. An old single truck open bench car of the L.I. Electric, with benches removed, had its motors mounted on the floor of the car and attached to the axles by chains, an arrangement similar to the broom gearing on a snow sweeper. With the motors above the floor the car could go through deep water. Behind this was car #15, contributed by the old New York & Long Island Traction. This had its motors removed, and was used as a trailer. When the flood came, this motor and trailer arrangement was towed to the lake by a third car, a regular trolley, because of the slowness of the old car caused by its low gear ratio, to avoid risk of tying up the line. The rig slowly shuttled back and forth in the lake, ferrying passengers, saving them the long detour on foot. When the Traction died in 1926 the Jamaica Central bought car #15 from Salzberg to keep the rig intact, and continued using it till 1930.

At a time when the trolley line was at the peak of its prosperity and success, certain of the officials of the Bank of Manhattan began to lose faith in the wisdom of continued trolley operation and were won over to the idea of bus substitution. For four years the company had been proudly sending off to the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce a yearly summary of its efforts in the improvement of service. Then in 1931 there was an ominous silence. The Jamaica Central was in a period of uncertainty and must have hesitated to make its usual sprightly predictions for the coming year.

There were several legitimate reasons for considering bus substitution. Automobile traffic on Jamaica Ave. was reaching a point of saturation and parking regulation had not yet been introduced. The schedule on the eight blocks between 160th and 168th Sts. was often impossible to maintain. But the deciding factor in the company's decision to motorize, however, was the city's announcement of its plan to widen Jamaica Ave. to 100 feet between 168th St. and Hempstead Turnpike. The Jamaica Central had just relaid all new rail on the Avenue up to 176th St. It was now faced with the prospect of relaying this stretch all over again, plus the two additional miles eastward. The company would have had to spend thousands for such a major project. Rather than do so, it informed the city that it would abandon trolley operation and thus save itself a fortune.

Another blow was the loss of the six big open bench cars for the Rockaway traffic. As early as May 12, 1926 the Public Service Commission had ordered the company to retire these trolleys by July 1st, 1928, but the company had pleaded for a stay, which was granted until Nov. 1st, 1929. Before the deadline the cars were considerably overhauled and the company requested a second stay until November 1st, 1930.(1) Realizing that the inevitable could

not be forestalled much longer, the management scrapped the six opens during the fall of the same year (1930) as soon as the heavy beach traffic was over.(1)

With its most profitable summer cars gone, the company decided on a drastic move: Motorization of the southern end of the Rockaway line between Hook Creek and Far Rockaway Station. On September 15, 1930, three Mack buses took over along 3.09 miles of route.(2) This very limited bus operation was a compromise between two divergent views in the company. The Bank of Manhattan looked forward to total motorization of the system, and the Rockaway buses were in the nature of an experiment to test the value of bus as opposed to trolley operation. The general manager, William E. Ross, however, was opposed to any motorization and used his influence to retain the street cars. When this failed he advocated trolley buses so as to save the investment in poles, overhead wire, feeder, new sub-station, etc., but the Bank of Manhattan overruled him.

Oddly enough, the buses were operating without a franchise. The three Mack buses had been obtained at a cost of \$21,067.50 and began operation only on an oral permit from the Department of Plant and Structures. This loose arrangement could hardly continue, so on April 24, 1931, the Jamaica Central Railways set up a bus subsidiary called the "Jamaica Buses, Inc."(3)

Business continued to be so encouraging on the system during 1931 that the company declared a \$15 dividend per share on 12,000 shares of its stock; this was the first dividend paid to investors in the entire thirty-five year history of the company. On Jan. 1st, 1932, wages of motormen were increased also.(4)

In the Spring of 1932 the company opened a campaign for public support of its motorization policy, and during May distributed handbills to all its passengers in the form of a petition to the Board of Estimate requesting that body to grant a bus franchise to the Jamaica Buses, Inc. The company reported that 18,425 such forms were handed out, and of these 18,328 were returned signed.(5)

On July 15, 1932 William E. Ross, the general manager who had done so much to modernize the Jamaica Central Railways, was rewarded with the presidency, retaining the post of general manager at the same time. With the arrival of fair weather in 1932 the city set to work widening Jamaica Ave. Houses and store fronts were jacked up and moved back all along the avenue, and sidewalks and curb lines relocated to conform with the new 100 foot width. This relocation was not uniformly done. At some points the north side of the avenue was moved back; at other points the south side. The effect of this was to make the existing trolley tracks, formerly in the center of the avenue, zigzag from side to side of the street. The trolleys were either well over on one side of the street, or running against oncoming traffic on the wrong side. In places passengers had to walk as much as 50 feet from the curb to board the car. It was obvious that this awkward arrangement could not last.

1. Report of the Jamaica Central Rys. to the PSC for 1930
2. same for 1931
3. Report of the PSC for 1931, p.422; also Report of the Jamaica Central Rys. to the PSC for 1931.
4. Report of the PSC for 1932, p.412
5. Queensborough Magazine, June 1932, p.229

During the same summer two more buses, this time Twin Coach vehicles, and equipment to service them, were bought for the Rockaway route at a cost of \$19,426.37.(1) On Nov.10th, 1932 the Jamaica Central set up a holding company called the "Jamaica Equipment Company" and transferred to it its fleet of five buses and \$200,000 in securities. Holders of Jamaica Central Railways stock received in exchange Jamaica Equipment Company stock.(2)

The year 1933 saw the end of the trolleys and the Jamaica Central Railways. During the Summer the company obtained additional Twin Coaches for the eventual motorization. On August 14th the city issued the company a new twenty-five year franchise for bus operation on all its routes in exchange for the surrender of its trolley franchises.(3) The long delay of a year in the granting of the franchise was occasioned by a dispute over the paving charges that the trolley company should bear. The city demanded \$500,000, but the trolley company would agree to only \$250,000. This figure was eventually accepted by the city and the franchise awarded. The buses would, however, be slightly more expensive to operate because the city demanded 5% of the annual receipts with a guarantee of not less than \$25,000 per annum, whereas the trolleys paid less than 2%. No obstacle now remained in the path of complete motorization. The company only awaited the delivery of the new buses, and these arrived in small groups during November and December.

On November 9th, 1933 the company announced in the Long Island Daily Press that it would motorize the Far Rockaway line the following Sunday, November 12th.(4) As a prelude to this action the company felt that some sort of ceremony befitting the occasion was expected of it, and so a procession of the new Twin Coaches on all the routes of the company was announced for Saturday, November 11th. At the time appointed a police escort and a party of politicians and company officials gathered at 160th St. and Jamaica Ave. and rode from there to Belmont Park, back to Jamaica, to Ozone Park, and then to Far Rockaway, where a delegation of business men and civic officials greeted the shiny new bus fleet.(5) Mr. Rowley and Mr. Ross of the company delivered appropriate speeches and the ceremony was over. Few in the party remembered the important part the now friendless trolleys had played in building up Central Queens, and all the trolley services of the past were forgotten, in anticipation of a rosy future. The following morning, November 12th, buses took over the whole Far Rockaway route, putting an end to the necessity of changing at Hook Creek as had been necessary since September of 1930.

During the next two weeks new buses continued to arrive, and the company announced its second motorization -this time the Jamaica Avenue line to Belmont Park. On midnight of November 25th the new Twin Coaches replaced trolleys on the route, and on December 3rd the Ozone Park route on Liberty Ave., the last remaining trolley line, yielded to the buses.(6) No ceremony marked the passing of the two main lines; the tired trolleys, most of them veterans of over 30 years' continuous service, crept back to the barn for a

1. Report of Jamaica Central Rys. to PSC for 1932 -Report of PSC for
2. Report of the PSC for 1933, p.423; (1932, p. 412
also Report of Jamaica Central Rys. for 1933)
3. Queensborough Magazine, Jan.1934, p.24; also Report of PSC for
4. Long Island Daily Press, Nov.9, 1933 2:2 (1934, p.416
5. L.I.Daily Press, Nov.11, 1933 3:2 -also Nov.12, 1933 1:6 -also Rockaway News, Nov.11, 1933 1:8 and 3:3
6. L.I.Daily Press, Nov.25, 1933 5:1 -also Nov.26, 1933 7:1 and Nov.27, 1933 9:1

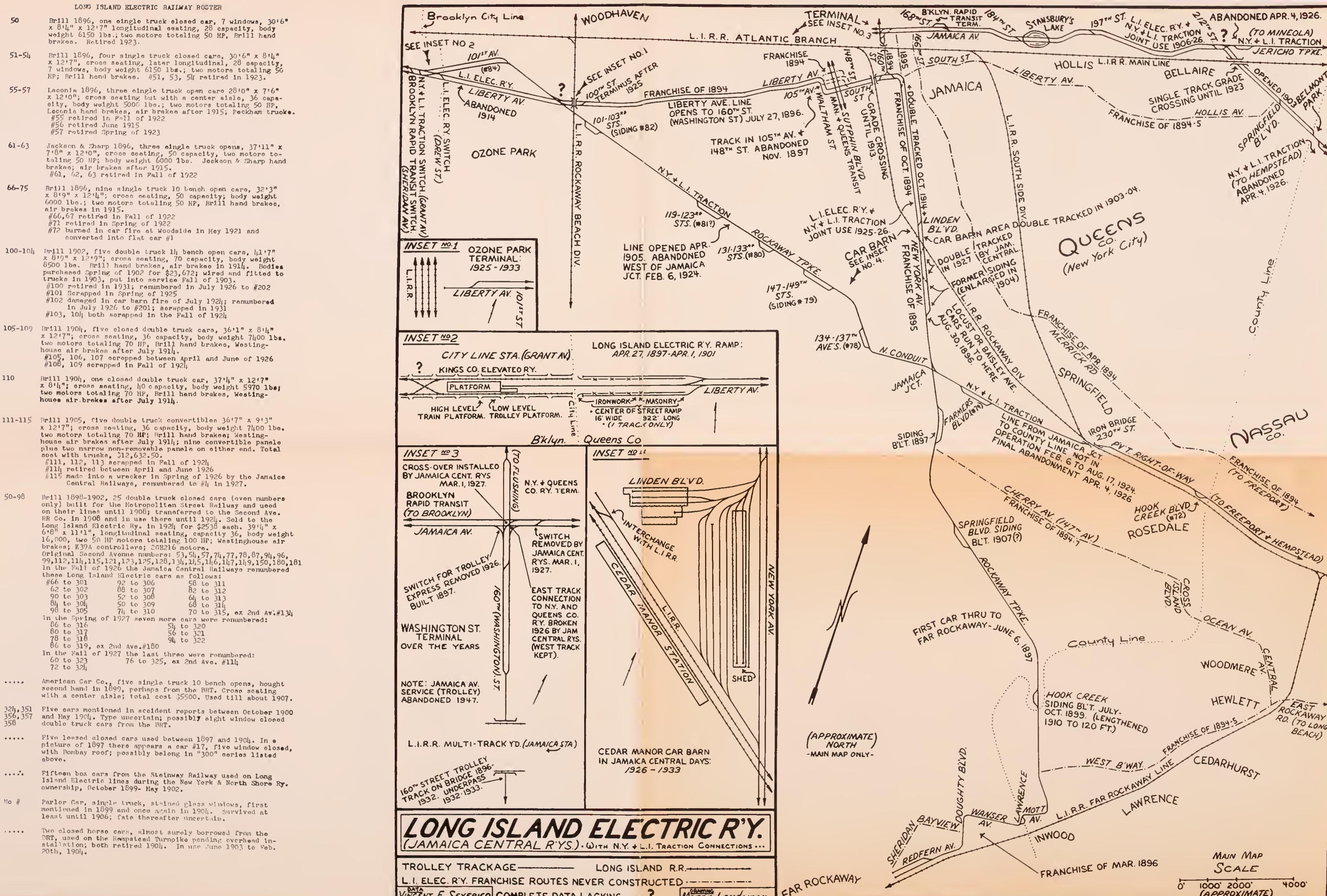
deserved retirement. Thus, after 37 years, trolley railroading in Central Queens, always small, often precarious, yet never interrupted, came to its inevitable end.

Within two weeks' time the overhead was taken down on all the lines. The track remained for several years longer except along Rockaway Blvd. where it was easy to pull up the exposed ties and rails from the loose sand. All the trolleys were run from Cedar Manor to the Woodside barn of the New York & Queens, which company had purchased them for parts. All during the Spring of 1934 the trolleys could be seen lined up bumper to bumper on the open air storage tracks. All the 300's, 400's and 500's were dismantled for spare parts. The six steel 600 series cars were repainted and repaired and put into service on the New York & Queens as #14-19.

Nothing remains of the old line today to remind the hurrying traveler of an earlier era. Yet there is more left than meets the eye. On Jamaica Ave. all the rails are still in place under four inches of asphalt paving. In and around the terminal at 160th St. Jamaica, most of the rail was torn up in the war scrap metal drive of 1942. The red and cream of the Jamaica Buses, and the bus garage on the old site at Cedar Manor are now the only reminders of a very different and more romantic era when singing rails and humming wires, and gay beach excursions were a lively and vivid and integral part of the colorful and picturesque pageant of old Jamaica.



Rear view of L.I. Electric carbarn on New York Ave. at Linden Blvd. on July 20, 1910. Building burned down completely in July 1924. (R. Presbrey)



JAMAICA CENTRAL RAILWAYS

101-106 Osgood-Bredley 1911, six double truck 15' bench open cars, bought in April 1926 from the New York & Stamford RR. Original numbers #157,159,161,163 (Taylor trucks) and #165,167 (Standard 0-50 trucks); 48'10" x 9'5" x 11'4"; cross seating, 75 capacity, body weight 10,500 lbs.; cost \$1,100 each. Two motors totaling 120 HP, K-6 controls. All six scrapped September and October 1930.

401-410 Brill 1920, ten single truck Birneys, bought from the Eastern Mass. Street Ry. in 1926. Put into service July 1, 1926. 28'1" x 8'0" x 11'8"; cross seating, 30 capacity, weight 11,420 lbs., cost \$3970 each. Westinghouse brakes; GE264 motors of 30 HP each; K-10 controllers; Brill 79E trucks. Original numbers: 5000, 5001, 5008, 5009, 5020, 5026, 5035, 5051, 5052, 5096.

501-506 Brill, six closed cars bought from the Third Avenue Railway System (probably 100 series semi-convertibles) in Feb. 1927 and put into service Mar. 11, 1927 and Apr. 5, 1927. 37'1" x 7'9" x 11'0"; longitudinal seating, 40 capacity; cost \$990 each. Westinghouse air brakes, GE 90 motors 50 HP each; K-11 control, Brill 22E trucks. #504 charred in 1928 to #4 as a wrecker to replace old #115 which had been numbered #4 up to that time. #501, 502, 503 steel front, wooden underframe. #504, 505, 506 wooden slat front, wooden underframe.

601-606 St. Louis 1915, six closed steel PAYE arch roof cars, bought in 1927 from the Empire State RR of Oswego, N.Y. Put into operation January 1928. 37'6" x 8'8" x 12'2"; cross seating, 44 capacity; weight 13,185 lbs., cost \$2830.18 each; GE200J motors totaling 80 HP; K39J controllers; Baldwin trucks.

15 Stephenson 1902, one closed trailer bought May 1926 from the defunct New York & Long Island Traction Co. through H.E. Salzberg, the wrecker, for \$25. Original number kept. 43'3" x 8'7" x 12'9"; cross seating, 44 capacity, used to ferry passengers over "Stansbury's Lake" during floods.

RENTED CARS - LONG ISLAND ELECTRIC PERIOD

Four cars leased for the year 1922-1923 from the Brooklyn City RR.

#397 St. Louis Car Co. 1897, eight window double truck closed; scrapped Feb. 28, 1930.
#707 Brooklyn & New York Supply Co. 1896, eight window, double truck closed car; scrapped April 30, 1930.
#746 Barney & Smith 1896; eight window double truck closed car; scrapped March 31, 1930.

771 St. Louis 1896, eight window double truck closed, remade into a one man car; scrapped in 1946.

1-20 Jewett 1904; nineteen cars from the Bridge Operating Co., (except 8) leased from 1922 to 1924.
#5 burned in 1923
#1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, 15, 19 burned in Cedar Manor car barn fire of July 6, 1924. All others scrapped 1926 and 1927.

1542, 1544, Ten 14' bench double-truck open cars, bought from the 1545-1551, Third Avenue Ry. in May 1923 by the New York & Long Island Traction Co. The cars were leased for \$3 a day to the Long Island Electric Ry. as soon as delivered. 37'9" x 7'6", cross seating of 60. Brill 22E trucks, West 56 motors.
#1550, 1551, 1544 scrapped 1926 by New York & Long Island Traction.
#1553 damaged in the Cedar Manor barn fire July 6, 1924, but repaired. Scrapped 1926.
#1552, 1545-1549 totally destroyed in same fire.

SERVICE CARS OF THE LONG ISLAND ELECTRIC and THE JAMAICA CENTRAL RAILWAYS

SAND

1 Peckham, probably 1890, single truck, two motors totaling 50 HP; 30' x 8'4" x 12'; last mentioned in 1915.

9 or 096 or 6 Long Island Electric built in 1923, made from one of the former single truck passenger cars, series 50-54. 32'3" x 8'9" x 12'1"; two motors of 70 HP; hand brakes. Renumbered in April 1925 to 4096; again by the Jamaica Central Railways in July 1933 to #6. Scrapped 1938 by the New York & Queens.

LINE

1 or 043 or 5 One line car bought in 1909 for \$730.97. 30'10" x 7'9" x 12'10"; two motors totaling 50 HP. Long Island Electric brakes; enclosed platform; weight 17,000 lbs. Damaged in the fire of July 1921, rebuilt in December 1924 and renumbered to #043; new dimensions 22'6" x 6'3"; again renumbered by the Jamaica Central Railways in 1928 to #5.

WRECKERS

126 One wrecker, 30' x 8'4" x 12'; weight, 6000 lbs; two motors of 50 HP; retired in the Fall of 1922.
1 One wrecker, formerly convertible passenger car #115. Put into service February 1927 and seemingly scrapped in 1928.
4 One wrecker, formerly passenger car #504, made into a wrecker in 1928 to replace the first #4 as above.

FLAT

1 One flat car, Long Island Electric built in 1898, 28'4" x 7'1" x 10'7"; two motors of 50 HP. Retired in the Spring of 1922.
.... One flat car, bought in 1907 and never mentioned again.
1 or 050 or 7 One flat car, made in 1922 from former open #72 which burned in May 1921. This replaced the older flat car #1. 30'3" x 6'4". Renumbered on April 13, 1925 to #050, and again by the Jamaica Central Railways in July 1933 to #7.

SPRINKLERS

1 Taunton 1898, capacity 2700 gallons; cost fully equipped \$1520. 17'11" x 6'9" x 11'3"; Taunton hand brakes, two motors of 50 HP total. Burned in June 1926 and scrapped.
.... One sprinkler bought in 1911 and never mentioned again.
231 Taunton 1898, bought second-hand from the New York & Queens County Railway in 1926.

SWEEPERS

1, 2, 3 or 300, 301, 302, or 015, 016, 017 McGuire-Cummings 1901 20'5" x 9'10" x 12'5" McGuire hand brakes; three motors of 120 HP total. #1, 2, 3, renumbered in 1913 to 300, 301, 302. All three damaged in the fire of July 6, 1924; rebuilt in November 1924 and renumbered to 015, 016, 017. Renumbered by Jamaica Central Railways in Jan. 1927 to 1, 2, 3 again. The New York & Queens renumbered them in 1933 to #04, 05, 06.

.... One sweeper with motor, bought in 1899 for \$2000. 22' One sweeper with motor, bought in 1906 for \$1481.63
.... One sweeper, bought in 1909

OTHERS

.... One non-motor service car bought in 1898.

0101 One tow car, bought October 1, 1925. 22'1" x 11'10" x 12'3"; hand brakes; two motors of 50 HP total.

DATES OF OPENING AND ABANDONMENT OF ALL THE TROLLEY LINES OF QUEENS, NASSAU, AND SUFFOLK

1866	Jamaica Avenue horse car line opens
1869	Dutch Kills (31st St.) line opened from 34 to 92 Sts. (Ferries
1871	Babylon horse car line opened
1874 Mar. 1	Calvary line on Borden Ave. to Calvary Cemetery opened
1875 June	Ravenswood (Vernon Ave.) line opened in L.I. City
1875 July	Broadway line opened as far as Steinway Street
1875 July	Flushing Ave. line opened to Steinway St. and 30th Ave.
1879 Aug. 1	Steinway St. line to 34th St. Ferry opened
1883 Aug. 12	Brooklyn and Steinway St. to 20th Ave. opened
1886 June 2	Far Rockaway horse car line to beach begins operation
1887 June 1	North Beach extension along Riker Ave. opened
1887 Dec. 17	Jamaica Ave. gets its first electric trolley, second in U.S.
1889 Fall	Calvary line completed through to Metropolitan Ave. in L.I. City
1890 July 19	Huntington village-Huntington station horse car begins
1891 Apr. 7	Flushing & College Point storage battery line opened
1891	Richmond Hill steam dummy line on Myrtle Ave. opens
1893	Northern Blvd. line to Woodside opened
1894 June 1	Junction Ave. trolley to North Beach opened
1895 Apr. 21	Corona line between Woodside and Flushing Bridge opens
1895 May 28	Electric trolley operation supplants dummies on Richmond Hill line
1896	Flushing Ave. line opens from Steinway St. on Ehret Ave. to North Beach
1896 July 25	Liberty Ave. line opened with two cars from 160th St. Jamaica to Drew St. City Line, Brooklyn
1896 Sept. 1	Service on New York Ave. to Baisley Blvd. opened
1897 Apr. 21	Liberty Ave. incline opened for L.I. Electric trolleys
1897 May 2	Trolley service on New York Ave. to Farmers Blvd. begun
1897 May 9	Trolley service on Jamaica Ave. between 168th St. and 212th St. opened with one car
1897 June 6	Far Rockaway line opened through to Far Rockaway station
1898 June 17	Huntington electric trolleys displace horse cars
1899 July 23	Long Island RR runs 15 bench open trolleys over its tracks between Far Rockaway and Rockaway Park stations
1899 Dec. 7	Flushing-Jamaica trolley service opened
1901 Dec. 15	Through trolley service on Northern Blvd. between 34th St. Ferry and Flushing opened
1902 Apr. 17	Northport trolley between Town Dock and station opens
1902 May 15	Hempstead-Freepost trolley opens on Main & Greenwich Sts.
1902 July 2	Sea Cliff trolley begins operating
1902 Sept. 11	Trolley service between Belmont Pk. and Hempstead begins
1903 May 10	Horse cars begin service from 212th St. to Belmont Park
1903 May 30	Dec. 8 "L" cars in street on Jamaica Ave.
1903 Sept. 21	Trolley service from Freeport to Park Ave. & Park Pl., Rockville Centre
1903 Fall	Hammels to 9th and Washington Aves. Rockaway Pk. opened
1904 Feb. 13	Electric cars between 212th St. Bellaire and Belmont Pk. Traction opens service to Franklin Ave. Valley Stream
1904 July 25	Rockaway Park to Belle Harbor trolley service begun
1904 Summer	Trolley service from Rosedale along North Conduit & Rockaway Aves. to City Line opened
1905 Apr. 10	Glen Cove trolley service between Sea Cliff station and Glen Cove landing opened
1905 Nov. 16	Jericho Tpk. from 212th St. to County Line, Floral Park, gets trolley service
1906 July 1	Through service on Jericho Tpk. between 212th St. and Mineola
1906	Babylon horse car at last yields to electric trolleys
1907 Nov. 16	Trolley service on Hillis Ave. between Mineola and Roslyn Leins
1908 Sept.	Trolley service between Rockaway Park and Belle Harbor re-routed
1909 July 25	Trolley operation between Mineola and Hicksville begins
1909 Aug. 25	Huntington station through to Melville, Farmingdale and Amityville town dock trolley service opened
1909 Fall	Cars begin running between Roslyn and Bayside
1909 July-Sept.	Horse car operation in Bayville
1909 Sept. 19	Trolley operation over Queensborough Bridge begins
1910 Feb. 1	Abandonment of operation in Jane, Academy and Lockwood Sts. (29th and 30th Sts.) in L.I. City
1910 June	Trolley service opened between Amityville and Babylon
1910 Aug. 12	Bayside-Flushing and Flushing-Whitestone extensions opened
1911 July 1	Patchogue trolley begins operation from Ocean Ave. to Blue Point Post Office
1912 May 13	Patchogue-Holtsville service opened
1912 July 5	Service opened between Belle Harbor and Neponsit
1913	Patchogue trolley opens branch to Sayville
1913 Jan. 29	Queens Blvd. line opens from 2nd Ave. Manhattan to Woodside line extended to Winfield (side
1913 Apr. 26	July 28
1913 Aug. 27	extended to 71st Ave. Forest Hills
1913 Aug.	Freeport Railroad opens from station to Fraaport Ferry
1914 Jan. 23	Queens Blvd. line extended to Hillside Ave. Jamaica
1914 Jan. 31	same line extended to LIRR station, Jamaica
1916 June 8	Rockaway extends service in Neponsit to Beach 149th St. Queens Blvd. line opens branch along Van Dam St., L.I. City, known as Industrial Center Line for 3/4 fare
1917 Sept. 25	Metropolitan Ave. line extended through from St. John's Cemetery to Jamaica Ave., Jamaica
1917	Connection on Fresh Pond Rd. between Myrtle Ave. and trolley private right-of-way under "L" built.
1918	Track laid in South Jamaica on 109th Ave. to 167th St. but never used east of LIRR; was to reach Nassau line
1919 Sept. 23	Amityville-Farmingdale-Huntington station service ends
1919 Oct. 10	Suffolk Traction Co. in Patchogue abandons service
1920 May 3	All New York & North Shore lines abandoned: Flushing through Bayside, Roslyn, Mineola to Hicksville; also Whitestone and Fort Washington branches
1920 August	Huntington Station-South Huntington (Jericho Tpk.) service re-opened
1920 May 15	Babylon-Amityville trolley service ends
1921	Grand Pier service at North Beach abandoned
1921	Huntington Station-Jericho Tpk. service abandoned
1921 Feb. 6	Northport trolley service abandoned
1921 Aug. 17	Trolley service on North Conduit Ave. between Rosedale and New York Ave. (Jamaica Junction) reopened after six month lapse
1924 Sept. 14	Far Rockaway trolley service to beach suspended
1924 Nov. 15	Glen Cove trolley service abandoned
1924- Dec.	Riker Ave. line to North Beach abandoned
1924- Dec. 31	Sea Cliff trolley line abandoned
1925-Aug. 3	Corona line abandoned through Woodside and Corona
1925-Aug. 5	Ehret Ave. line to North Beach abandoned
1926-Apr. 4	New York & Long Island Traction shuts down; all trolley service in Hempstead, Freeport, Rockville Centre, Baldwin, Rosedale, Valley Stream, Mineola, New Hyde Park, Floral Park, Bellrose, abandoned.
1926-Sept. 9	Trolley between Hammels and Far Rockaway, operating over the LIRR tracks, stops
1927-Aug. 15	Huntington Harbor-Huntington station service ends
1928-Aug. 26	All trolley service in Rockaway Park ends
1930-Sapt. 15	Part of the Far Rockaway line between Far Rockaway station and Hook Creek abandoned
1933-Nov. 11	Hook Creek-Jamaica trolley service on Rockaway Blvd. and New York Ave. ceases
1933-Nov. 25	Jamaica Ave. service between 160th St. and Belmont Park ends
1933-Dec. 3	Liberty Ave. line between Jamaica and 100th St. Ozone Park ends
1934-Dec. 6	Flushing Ave. line (Astoria Blvd.) abandoned
1937-Apr. 17	Queens Blvd. trolley service stops
1937-Aug. 10	Flushing-Jamaica trolley service abandoned
1937-Aug. 23	Collega Point trolley abandoned
1937-Sep. 5	Northern Blvd. trolley ceases
1937-Oct. 30	Calvary Cemetery trolley service between L.I. City and Metropolitan Ave. ends
1939-Sep. 29	Trolley service on Vernon and Jackson Aves., 31st St. and Broadway in Long Island City ends
1939-Nov. 1	Steinway St. line abandoned
1947-Sept. 1	Cypress Hills car line abandoned
1947-Nov. 30	Jamaica Ave. trolley service abandoned
1949-June 12	Metropolitan Ave. line abandoned
1949-July 17	Flushing-Ridgewood line loses trolley service
1949-Aug. 25	Junction Ave. line ceases
1950-Apr. 26	Richmond Hill line on Myrtle Ave. loses trolleys

